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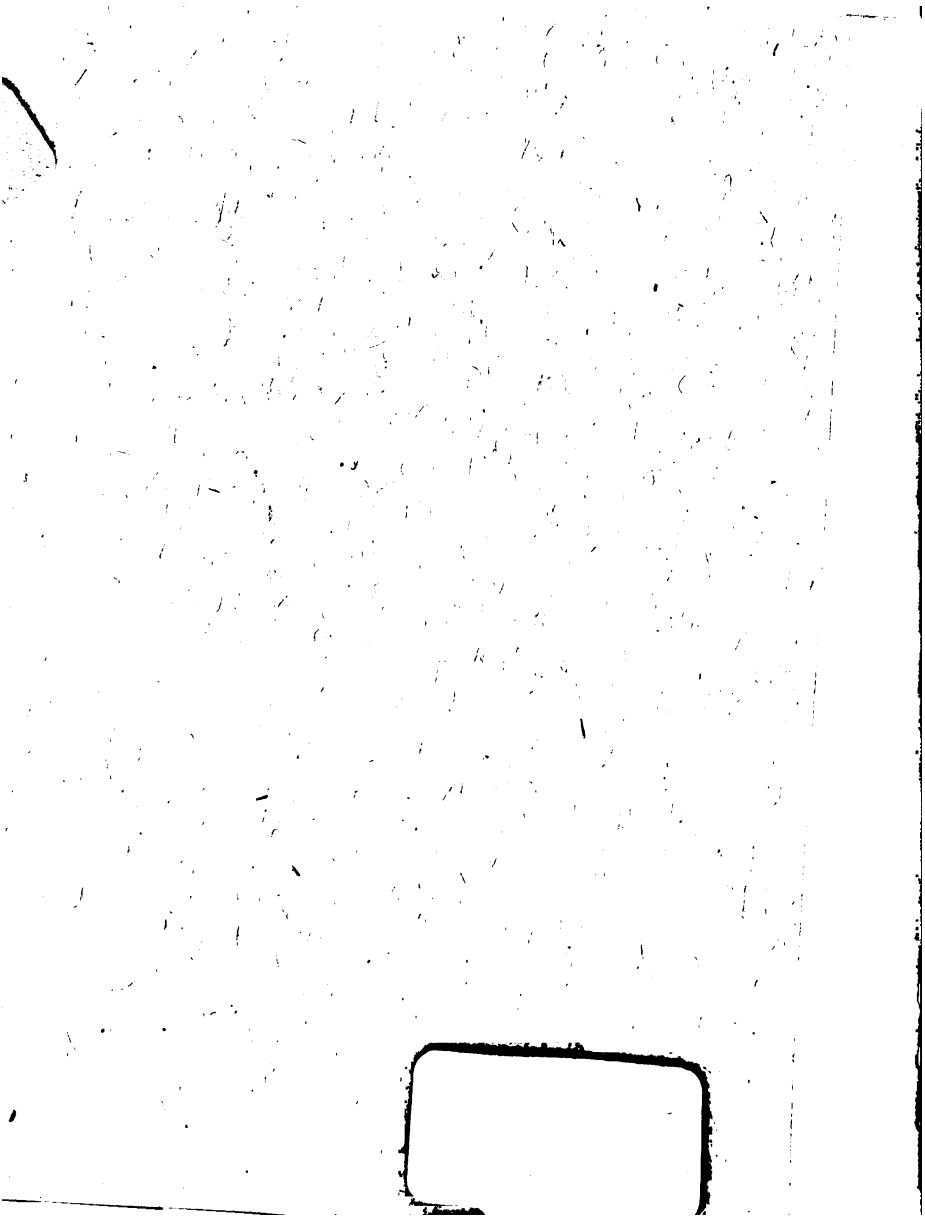

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MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE.

A ROMANCE IN REAL LIFE.

BY JULES CLARETIE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY JOHN STIRLING.

DONATION ... 1927

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"'Monsieur Le Ministre' is a most extraordinary book, and will without doubt be as widely known here as in Paris, where it is said to be a pen and ink portrait of a Prime Minister of France, and where it has already passed through forty editions. Its merit is due not only to the extreme interest of its plot, but to its dramatic situations, its charm of style, and to its clear delineations of character, each individual being the type of a class. That this work is destined to as great popularity here as in France is very certain, for it describes scenes and persons with which we, unfortunately, are equally at home. The temptations and corruption of political life are as marked in Republican America as in Republican France. Who that is familiar with life in Washington cannot point to some man whose brilliant prospects have been ruined, whose home has been destroyed by the wiles of some dexterous adventuress, whose punishment, however, has been neither as swift nor as sure as that which overtakes the Marianne of this novel? The tender, loving, unselfish wife of the ambitious politician, the meretricious artist, the weary journalist, and Vaudrey himself, who, starting in his career with high hopes and noble aims, falls through his weakness an easy prey to an unprincipled woman, are all characters drawn with inimitable skill, and leave an indelible impression on the minds of the readers."

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PREFACE AND KEY.

THE translator has the pleasure of presenting to the American public a work which is now going through the fortieth edition in Paris, and which is there rightly regarded as one of the most remarkable books of the present epoch.

The characters are so vividly drawn that the greatest interest is naturally felt in the originals of the life-like portraits. We therefore give to our readers the following key:

Vaudrey, the Minister, commonly identified with M. Bardoux the late Minister of Public Instruction, is in part Monsieur Ricard and in part M. Claretie himself.

Baron Hermann is Haussmann, and the Madame Legrand, for whose benefit he subscribes one hundred francs, is Mademoiselle Beaugrand, and Marie Launay is Marie Tremblay.

Madame Evan, the lady of the quasi-official

salon, is Madame Edmond Adam, and the Countess d'Horville, who gives literary matinées, is Madame d'Haussonville. Monsieur de Prangins is Emile de Girardin, and Denis Ramel, the old Journalist, is drawn from Louis Jourdan and Léon Plée, the latter's funeral being photographed in that of Ramel.

Guy de Lissac is in the book arrested on the charge of wearing the ribbon of the Legion of Honor without being entitled to do so, the arrest being made in reality to afford the heroine, "Marianne Kayser," an opportunity of recovering her letters, which, if given to her lover, would compromise her matrimonial prospects.

It was Léon Duchemin, a well known journalist, writing over the signature of Fervacques, who was arrested some years since on a somewhat similar charge on the race course at the Bois de Boulogne. The police in the meantime searching his rooms for his alleged title to the foreign decoration in dispute, and seizing that opportunity to carry off a correspondence that might have involved a lady of the highest rank.

JOHN STIRLING.

CONTENTS.

Chapter		Page
I.	AT THE OPERA	23
II.	SOCIAL AMBITIONS	43
III.	A LOVE MATCH	61
IV.	A BACHELOR'S QUARTERS	81
V.	MADAME MARSY'S RECEPTION	108
VI.	QUESTIONS AND CROSS QUESTIONS	140
VII.	A NEW DEPARTURE	159
VIII.	CLAIRE DUJARRIER	207
IX.	VANDA'S HOTEL	220
X.	ADRIENNE	242
XI.	POLITICS	262
XII.	A CASTILIAN DUC	286
XIII.	INFATUATION	315
XIV.	THE RED RIBBON	356
XV.	CLOUDS IN THE SKY	399
XVI.	THE DUC AND THE DUCHESS	433
XVII.	RETRIBUTION	449

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE.

BY JULES CLARETIE.

CHAPTER I.

AT THE OPERA.

THE third act of L'Africaine was just over. The Minister left the Manager's *loge*, and said with a smile as if anxious to throw off an oppressive burthen of care:

"Shall we go to the *Foyer*, Granet?"

"By all means, Your Excellency!"

It was necessary to cross the enormous stage encumbered by machinists, who were changing and setting the scenes as sailors manœuvre ships. Men in dress suits, wearing white cravats, with their overcoats on their arms and their crush hats on their heads, were making their circuitous way among the ropes, hurrying to the *Foyer*. These men seemed to come from all

sides, from the stalls and the boxes, the greater number were humming an air from the opera, and seemed to be perfectly at home in the anteroom. A youth wearing a white cravat, sat at a small table and took down the names of every person who came in, upon a long sheet of paper divided into two columns, at the head of one of which was "*Gentlemen*," and on the other "Physicians."

He rose from time to time, to greet with a low, respectful bow the official persons whom he recognized.

"Have you seen Monsieur Vaudrey, Louis?" asked a man who, with his glass in his eye and a youthful air, seemed entirely at home in this place.

"Monsieur Le Ministre is in the Manager's *loge*," answered the Secretary.

"Thanks, Louis."

And as the habitué entered the stage by the narrow steps, the young man inscribed, in a clerkly hand, upon the paper before him:

"Monsieur Guy de Lissac."

Monsieur Vaudrey, the Minister, who was looking for Lissac, had taken Granet's arm, and was watching with considerable curiosity and interest the working of this enormous machinery, managed by the swarming multitude of workmen; it was an entirely novel sight to Vaudrey, who showed his wonder and almost stupefaction with a certain naïvete at which Granet, his friend and colleague in the Chamber, smiled behind his carefully waxed moustache.

"This is more interesting to me than the Opera itself!" said the Minister.

The huge stage laid before him like a wide stretch of yellow sea sand. And Vaudrey looked down at that, and then up to the symmetrical arrangement of pulleys and rafters, lighted by long rows of gas burners. A large canvas at the back represented a bright Hindoo landscape blazing with sunlight; and in the vast space left between the lowered curtain and this canvas, black lines moved to and fro. These were the odd shadows of the visitors who, in their close-fitting evening dresses, were repeated as by a magic lantern.

"It is really very curious," said the Minister, "but show me the *Foyer*, Granet, you know it?"

"I am a Parisian, born and bred," answered the Deputy. This was all he said, but a faint, well-bred smile reminded Sulpice Vaudrey that His Excellency was country bred and had yet much to learn.

Sulpice with some hesitation and difficulty crossed the enormous stage, from which was being hurriedly removed the huge ship of the *Africaine* by a crowd of workmen in blue shirts who, talking vehemently, were either pushing or carrying tall masts or sails, opening trap-doors and rapidly disposing of the framework of this work of art. This human ant hill and its inhabitants so busy at work, the immensity of this place which contained so much beside the ships, absolutely stupefied the Minister, who finally stopped short with his shoulders touching the lowered curtain.

From behind the flies came a murmur as glasses were levelled upon him. He distinctly heard the words:

"It is the new Minister of the Interior!"

"Really! Monsieur Vaudrey?"

"Monsieur Vaudrey."

And Vaudrey straightened himself up a little under the renewed fire of these lorgnettes, while Granet said to a man in a black coat standing near him, the chorus manager:

"It is very plain that this is the first time he has been here!"

Yes, it was quite true. This was the first time that the new Minister had put his foot in the coulisses of the Opera. He brought with him all the eager interest and curiosity of a school-boy. He said to himself how fortunate it was that on this occasion Madame Vaudrey, who was a little indisposed, had declined coming to the Opera. He felt as if he were playing truant, and that he had a glimpse of a new world, enchanting and fairy-like.

Musicians in the costumes of Brahmins, their spectacles on their noses, were deciphering their score and carrying their instruments with as tender care as if they had been babies in swaddling clothes. Indians, with painted faces and loins girded with yellow cloth, stretched and yawned as they waited for the time to come when they should be called. Warriors lay on wooden benches asleep with their mouths open and their brows covered by helmets pulled down over their noses like visors.

Others, again, had placed their helmets at their feet, and leaning against the wall and on their lances as if

they were canes, shut their eyes in repose, if not in sleep.

Little girls in short petticoats pirouetted about singing as they danced, older ones were pulling their dresses upon their shoulders, shaking out their skirts, or tying up the ribbons of their pink shoes.

Others, again, wore a sort of casque with gilt ornaments, and laughed gayly as they clashed their silver cymbals.

Rough youths, with false beards, dressed like High Priests, in yellow robes striped with red, elbowed them as they passed without the slightest apology.

A police officer, silent and grave, walked about among all these girls.

The *Foyer* at the back was draped with curtains of gray and violet, and upon the stairs sat some of the danseuses talking with the young men in black coats. Vaudrey looked about this large salon blazing with light, at the groups of women with their white shoulders and short skirts, among whom the men looked like black beetles among roses, and by degrees he distinguished the various features of the room, the innumerable mirrors, the paintings on the wall representing antique dances, and portraits of Camarro and Noverra.

Sulpice Vaudrey had heard much of this *Foyer* and was disappointed. The crude and searching light showed him the lack of freshness in the hangings and the tarnished brilliancy of the gilding. These pretty girls with their voluminous skirts and white shining arms, with their fixed smiles, as they moved their satin

clad feet to and fro, seemed to him unnatural, false and faded.

"And is that all?" asked the Minister, involuntarily.

"Upon my word!" said Granet, "you are hard to please."

There was a little stir of expectation, a movement of curiosity and coquetry among these girls when the Minister made his appearance. He had been seen in the Manager's *loge*, and it was taken for granted that he would visit the *Foyer*. Every one therefore was awaiting him. On the divans, around and under the mirrors, were young men carefully dressed—many of them quite bald—surrounded by danseuses, who, laughing gayly, combined to hide them with their voluminous skirts. The men, stooping forward a little, hid their faces among the tarletan and tulle, as women bury their noses in their bouquets when they see some one coming whom they do not wish to recognize.

The Minister detected this manœuvre and smiled slyly. He recognized several of his Prefects, those in the vicinity of Paris, from Versailles, and Chartres, who were ruling France thus lightly in this *Foyer*. Amiable functionaries of the Minister of Fine Arts, were also studying the æsthetic between the acts. All regimes seemed, in fact, to be fraternizing in this strange place, as Sulpice Vaudrey pointed out to Granet; the old beaux of the Empire with waxed moustache, and hair either gray or newly dyed, wearing stiff collars which cut into their pendulous cheeks like jelly invaded by a sharp knife, were scattered among

the young fops of the Republic who, with wide-open eyes, a soft down, dark or light, on their upper lips, and quick alert movements, seemed half disgusted with themselves at being among these stiff and stately beings belonging to a past generation.

"The superannuated and the aspirants," said Vaudrey, in a low tone.

"You grasp the situation like a Parisian," answered Granet.

"There are provincial Parisians sometimes," answered Sulpice, who was a little flushed and whose heart beat more rapidly than usual.

"Ah! Monsieur Le Ministre," said a stout man with a gay, bright face, his hair and whiskers white as snow, "you here! By what happy chance?"

He came forward as he spoke and bowed low, not obsequiously, but with that warm cordiality born of money and embonpoint. Fat and wealthy, in capital health, and as young at sixty as most men at forty, Molina passed his afternoons at the Bourse, and his evenings in the *Foyer* of the Opera House.

He ruled the theatre a little, and the *coryphées* a great deal; his white hair gave him the right to be respected, and his wealth the right to be lightly regarded. Risen from social dregs he had reached a lofty eminence, and Molina at home, at the Bourse, and the Opera, patronized artists of all kinds. Famous pictures, fashionable women, statues of marble, and statues of flesh, he wanted them all. He collected the choicest pictures and the rarest objects, but he showed

no taste in his selection, and he bought those *filles* who were conspicuous and made them still more so by his notice.

Sometimes, he invented them, so to speak, and it amused him to place one of these creatures in his coupé and watch, as she drove around the lake or to the races, the crowd that gathered around her merely because she had been made conspicuous by Molina. He had formerly sold old clothes at Marseilles to the Piedmontese and to the sailors in the Jewish quarter, and now it was his great joy to see the Parisians from the Boulevards and the clubs buy the worn out remnants of his old loves.

"You here in the *Foyer?*" repeated the financier. "You amaze me, and I shall really feel it my duty to acquaint Madame Vaudrey with the fact.

Sulpice smiled, although a little amazed at the sound of his wife's name and at the effect it had upon him here amid these surroundings. It seemed to him that this mere mention brought her into this place. He had felt somewhat the same a few days previous, when apropos of his appointment as Minister, the reporters had, in the newspapers, related details of his marriage, described his home and sketched a portrait of this Adrienne who was the passion of his life.

"After all though," continued Molina, "it is as well that Madame Vaudrey should become accustomed to this sort of thing. The Opera has its office in politics. The key of the situation is often found in the coulisses!" And the financier laughed gayly, and in his laugh there was a ring like gold pieces.

He then proceeded to explain to Vaudrey all the petty mysteries of the *Foyer*, like a man who has spent much time in this little world, and with a word, and sometimes with a mere gesture, he sketched for the Minister a brief biography of these girls, who were lightly dancing past, scarcely touching the boards with the tips of their toes.

Sulpice was certainly astonished at what he heard and saw, and took little pains to conceal his amazement. He had made his début, however, that was clear.

"Ah! Monsieur Le Ministre," said Molina, delighted at the effect he had produced, "you can have little idea of this sort of life until you have tried it. Nothing could well be more amusing; it is a world by itself. These little girls grow up under your eye almost like asparagus. You see an awkward, ungainly child running about, she gives you a careless nod as she munches an apple or cracks her nuts like a mouse, you go away for three months to pass the season at Vichy or Dieppe, and lo! on your return an absolute transformation! The butterfly has broken through the chrysalis. The little imp is no longer a child; she has become a woman. The sly eyes look at you with an expression that disturbs you. Six months before you gave her two cents' worth of chestnuts, and now you offer her a coupé. And in this way, from generation to generation, we assist at the organization of these recruits who first take up their arms here, and thence pass into the ranks of the old guard and build for themselves a new *Invalides* to which they go when their knees are out of joint."

"Knees out of joint?" said the Minister, much puzzled.

"An especial term which you probably will not find in Maurice Black's work on Political Economy, but it means when they have met with misfortunes."

"But do they often hurt their knees?"

"Ah! My dear Sir, don't you see yourself how liable they are to such accidents with all their pirouettes. Their trade after all is something like politics!"

And Molina began to laugh at his somewhat facile pleasantry, and putting a huge glass upon his large nose, in which was a cleft like that of a hunting dog, he exclaimed, suddenly, as he turned toward the door:

"Ah! There is Marie Launay! What on earth has she got in her hand?"

Slender and graceful in her drapery as a Hindoo dancer, a girl of seventeen or eighteen came slowly into the room. Girl as she was her large blue eyes were full of fire. She was singing as she came, and she held a long sheet of paper.

She shook, as if it annoyed her, the necklace of large beads which hung around her slender throat and fell low upon her yet unformed bust, while she looked around for some one in the crowd. Suddenly she espied a pretty dimpled brunette, who, surrounded by men, was laughing heartily.

"Anna! you have not subscribed," she cried.

The brunette quickly disengaged herself from the youths who were chanting her praises, and with three

light bounds reached the side of Marie Launay, who handed her a pencil and the sheet of paper.

"What the deuce is that?" said Molina.

"Let us go and see!" answered Granet.

"Would it not be an intrusion?" asked Vaudrey, half seriously.

The financier had by this time reached the two girls, and asked the pretty blonde what the paper contained. While the other danseuse spelled out the names, Marie Launay, who was very lovely with her fair, waving hair, had a pretty, childlike smile of half embarrassment as she stood before this big man, and then lifting her soft, blue eyes to Sulpice and Granet, who by this time had joined Molina:

"That? It is the subscription for Mademoiselle Legrand."

"Ah! To be sure," said Molina. "You intend to present her with a statuette?"

"Yes—on the occasion of her departure. All the Opera has subscribed—and even our visitors. Look!"

Marie Launay snatched from her friend the sheet of paper where the different names, some in ink and some in pencil, displayed every variety of handwriting, some of which looked as if inscribed by school boys, while other signatures were quite elegant. Molina began to laugh, shaking from head to foot as usual, as running over the list he found among the names of the ballet dancers and the chorus singers some well known appellation.

"Ah! Monsieur Le Ministre! Look at this: Amélie

Dunois, two francs; Jeanne Garnot, five francs; Bel-Enfant (Charles) one franc and twenty centimes; Warnier, two francs, Baron Hermann, 100 francs! The Baron! The former Prefect! Hermann's name down with Warnier and Bel-Enfant! Upon my word it is delicious. If one were to see that in a newspaper it would not be believed. I wonder if there is a reporter here. He ought to have this at once."

Granet, from under his half-closed lids, was examining little Marie Launay while he caressed his black mustache, and the other girl, Anna, confused by Molina's hearty laugh, stood twisting the pencil between her little fingers and looked at Marie, as much as to say: "You know I dare not write before all these people."

"Lend me your pencil, my child," said Molina.

She held it out to him very timidly.

"Molina must do a little better than the Baron," said the financier.

He turned the handle of the pencil to lengthen the lead, and putting his large boot on one of the divans he wrote on his knee, with the rapidity of a man who is accustomed at the Bourse to writing his orders with a lead pencil:

"Solomon Molina, 500 francs."

"Ah! Monsieur Molina," said Marie Launay, looking over his shoulders, "that is very gallant. If everybody else had been as generous we might have given a golden statue of La Danse to Mademoiselle Legrand."

"When you want Carpeaux group for yourself, my

child," said Molina, "you may come for it in a fiacre and—and you may take it away in your coupé."

The child grew as red as a cherry through all her poudre de riz, and her slender, graceful shoulders were flushed with a faint rose tint, which added to the impression she had already given of being a bud just ready to unfold.

Vaudrey felt that this place was full of strange temptations, but he was singularly fascinated by it. Visions of other days passed quickly before him—phantoms in light robes—spectres of apple orchards in full bloom—waving plumes of lilac trees—violets at Ville d'Avray—happy, heedless days when he as a student went into the country. These gauze skirts recalled the white dresses under the chestnut trees—these ballet girls reminded him of the blonde grisettes whom he had admired when he was but twenty.

He extended his hand to the sheet of paper when Molina had signed his name, and said to Marie Launay:

"It is my turn, Mademoiselle."

Granet smiled.

"Excuse me," he said, "but would you write the name of The Minister of the Interior under that of Bel-Enfant?"

"You are right," answered Vaudrey, laughing. "Believe me or not, as you choose, but I entirely forgot that I was Minister."

"It was the same way with me when I was decorated," said Molina. "I refused to take my coat from

the woman to whose care I had consigned it because I saw it had a red ribbon in the button-hole, and I insisted that it could not be mine. But, nowadays," and he laughed, with the same sound of the rattle of gold pieces, "I am astonished not to find red ribbon on my flannel vests."

Vaudrey left Marie Launay and listened to Molina.

"Ah!" said the financier, "if your Excellency had but the time, you would see some very odd things. Among the ballet dancers there is a man, a marble-cutter, who spends his days cutting tombstones, and in the evening dances and shows all his teeth. This man keeps a sharp lookout for business, and makes many a happy hit at rehearsals. Then, too," continued Molina, "I have seen a danseuse here who has just buried her mother, and stops here to practice her steps. She was obliged to do it, you know, to earn her bread. This Opera house is the land of antithesis, I assure you."

The financier would have talked all night and Sulpice Vaudrey could have listened, for he felt as if he were in a new world, and a most attractive one to a man who, still young, had had a severe and laborious life, and who knew of Paris only what he had seen while studying law there. The parquette of the Comedie Francaise, the galleries of the Luxembourg and the Louvre, the libraries, the archives, the balls of the *Quartier* and the *Foyer* of the Opera on the occasion of two masked balls, and this was all!"

The great man of the Provence arrived from Grenoble with a strong inclination for Paris, and he found

himself abruptly introduced into the *Foyer* at the Opera among all these ballet girls; he realized too that every eye was fixed upon him as he stood in the centre of the salon and beheld his own image reflected from all the long mirrors around the room. He saw that he was watched as well as avoided. The new Minister! The head of all these Prefects and sub-Prefects—and of these secretaries who were taking their ease on these velvet divans.

All these glances, these feminine whispers, these masculine frowns and this evident desire on the part of some of these men to escape observation, were making Vaudrey very uncomfortable. Suddenly he perceived Guy de Lissac coming toward him, evidently in search of him. As soon as de Lissac, assisted by his glass, saw the Minister, he went directly to him and saluted him with great cordiality, but also with great respect and a certain reserve. Sulpice soon set this reserve aside. He advanced to meet Guy, and taking his hand, said gayly:

"Do you know that I have been disappointed in not seeing you before? You are the only one of my friends who has not congratulated me!"

"You know, my dear Minister," answered de Lissac, in the same tone, "that I do not regard it as such absolute happiness to be Minister, and I really see no reason why your friends should fall on your neck and cry bravo! I am happy if you are happy, glad if you are glad. I congratulate you if you wish me to do so."

"You and old Ramel," answered Sulpice, "are the two most original persons I ever met."

"With this difference: Ramel is a Puritan, an antique, a marble, and I a lounger and a skeptic. He is a bronze, and you find Lissac is only an imitation. But all the same I have come in search of you to ask a favor."

"And what is that, my dear Guy?" cried Vaudrey, with his face flushed with joy. "Only tell me what I can do for you."

"I am in Madame Marsy's box. You do not know Madame Marsy? She applauded you in the Tribune. She wished you all sorts of good things, and now she has seen you in the manager's *loge* and she has begged me to present you to her or her to you, she cares little which; and I, upon my word, am not quite sure that your excellency has not changed the established order of things."

"Madame Marsy?" said Vaudrey. "Is she not the widow of an artist, a painter? Has she not a political salon?"

"Precisely; a new salon in competition with that of Madame Evan! Athenian Republic, you see. That is not disagreeable to you?"

"Quite the contrary, I assure you. We shall found the republic only with the assistance of women."

"Upon my life!" said Lissac, laughing, "politics and honors have not changed you!"

"Indeed they have not. With twenty years more and much less hair, I am much as I was in 1860."

"Hôtel Racine! Rue Racine," said Lissac. I dreamed in those days of becoming a Musset, and I have become

what? A spectator, an amateur, a Parisian. Nothing more. You I fancy, thought of becoming Barnave, Vergniaud or Barbaroux, and you have arrived at your goal."

"Arrived!" said Vaudrey.

He tried to shake his head modestly, as if this delightful word had not reached his delighted ear, and flattered his vanity; but his eyes shone with honest joy and he felt such a need of sympathy that he could not but smile at this admission of his triumph from the companion of his youth. The severest judges are those who have heard you babble of your boyish dreams, as they are apt to think when you have conquered this Future that you have stolen it. Lissac, at all events, was not jealous!

"Let us go and see Madame Marsy, my dear Guy!" said Sulpice. "If she resembles her portrait which was on exhibition at the last salon, she must be very charming."

He moved away with Lissac as he spoke, after giving one last glance around the *Foyer* where the ballet girls were still pirouetting, and where the stiff old beaux and youthful sub-prefects were still half hiding behind their cloudy skirts. Granet turned to take leave of Vaudrey from little Marie Launay who smiled with an artist's air as the financier whispered a flattering word in her ear, and then turning to Vaudrey the banker said courteously:

"I am always at your service, your excellency; you have but to command."

"To-morrow, Monsieur Le Ministre," said Granet, "I shall see you in regard to the prisons."

Vaudrey went away acknowledging the various salutes he received with an amicable smile.

To return to his *loge* it was necessary that Sulpice should cross the stage once more. The new scenes were all set. Distant temples appeared against a back ground of blue sky, and masses of rich flowers were seen among tropical foliage. Electric lights illuminated the vast stage with a soft brilliancy not unlike the moon, and Sulpice looked down with a smile on his own shadow clearly defined on this sheet of light as upon the breast of a sleeping lake. It seemed to him that this blaze, this fairy-like brilliancy was the aureole of his own future.

Just as he left the *Foyer* Sulpice met a man of rather solemn aspect, wearing a black coat buttoned to his chin. He was bald, with long gray locks encircling large ears. His cheeks were red and his neck long and yellow. He blushed a little at the blaze of light, and his nostrils dilated to drink in the perfume of the flowers with which the *Foyer* was full.

Sulpice glanced at him involuntarily, and uttered an exclamation as he recognized in this man his predecessor, a Protestant, a Huguenot, a widower and the father of five or six daughters. A man who was supposed to be as proper and discreet as the tracts distributed by the Bible Society.

"Ah! Monsieur Pichereau!" he said.

The other shook his bald head, and his already red

cheeks became a vivid crimson on seeing Sulpice his successor, who held out both gloved hands to greet him cordially. Guy de Lissac did not laugh.

The two men, the old and the new Ministers, stood for a moment among the Brahmins, the figurantes and the scene shifters, one smiling in a friendly way, the other with a grimace intended for a smile; many curious and malicious eyes were fixed upon them.

"Ah! I have caught you my dear colleague," said Sulpice, greatly amused by Pichereau's embarrassed air, who buttoned up like a quaker in his black coat, had somewhat the air of a sexton caught in some grievous error.

"I—" stammered Pichereau, "I only—yes, my dear Minister, it was in search of you that I came here."

"Here?" said Vaudrey.

"Here!"

"Are you in earnest?"

"Yes, I wished to speak to you."

The unfortunate Pichereau pulled down his vest in a mechanical sort of way, and in a very solemn tone, said:

"Yes, I wished to speak to you—to speak to you on a matter of great importance—in regard to the Protestant community."

Sulpice shouted with laughter.

This Pichereau, looking like a Calvinistic clergyman, glanced through his spectacles around the *Foyer*. He saw Marie Launay laughing gayly at some witticism uttered by Molina. Several reporters scented a paragraph for their newspapers, and drew nearer to the

two Ministers and tried to hear something of what they were saying.

Guy de Lissac, who was intensely amused at the disturbed air of the ex-Minister, was rubbing his hands and endeavoring to look very amiable, yet showed by the vinegar-like aspect of his face the gladness with which he would have strangled his successor.

"We will take another occasion, my dear colleague," said Sulpice, gayly, "to speak of your communities. This surely is not the place! *Non est hic locus!* Let me see you soon."

"Most certainly, my dear Minister," answered Pichereau, with difficulty, muttering these polite words through his teeth.

Vaudrey drew Lissac on, whispering in his ear laughingly:

"Ah! the Quaker! He has resigned his portfolio but retained the key of the *coulisses!*"

"It seems," answered Guy, "as if the door of the coulisses were the consolation of the ousted. Marie Launay's blue eyes are wonderfully soothing to a Minister who is about to fall from power."

"Molina is right then," answered Vaudrey gayly, and he laughed heartily with his friend at the irritated, discomfited air of his predecessor, this Geneva puritan, who was on his way to seek consolation in the *Foyer* of the ballet, while his five or six daughters read aloud their English romances and sang their hymns under the green spectacles of their governess at home.

"After all," he said with a laugh, "it is not so bad to fall if one falls into the arms of these ballet dancers!"

CHAPTER II.

SOCIAL AMBITIONS.

MADAME MARSY was impatiently waiting the return of Guy de Lissac. As soon as she saw Vaudrey within range of her lorgnette, she resolved to enroll him in her salon—a new salon—a salon which had just been created. Madame Marsy was bitten by the tarantula which imparts to modern life all the nervous excitement of St. Vitus' dance. A widow, rich, still young and greatly admired, she had adopted a certain rôle in order to furnish herself with occupation and amusement. She was one of those women who was as constantly under the lead pencil of a reporter as before the camera of a photographer. Of her home life and of her inner life very little was in reality known. But the tint of her hair, the color of her eyes, her toilettes, the names of her milliner and dress makers, the menu of her dinners, the programme of her concerts, the list of her guests at her table and in her salon, were all public property, and Madame Sabine Marsy was always in the newspapers. It was whispered, moreover, that of Sabine Marsy many a romantic story could be told. It was murmured that she had led her husband a very hard life. He was Philippe Marsy, the artist, who had painted the "Charity" which hangs at the Luxem-

bourg between "A Nymph," by Henner, and "A Portrait of a Lady," by Carolus Duran. Pretty, independent and sufficiently wealthy—after the sale of Marsy's pictures, whose most trifling studies were madly disputed for and brought their weight in gold at the Hôtel Dronat under Monsieur Pillet's hammer—Sabine had, after the expiration of her mourning, opened a salon. Surrounded by friends and taking care to arouse no jealousy among her adorers, all of whom were treated with entire uniformity, she seemed anxious to hold a court and have no favorites. She had one son, who was growing up and at college, but this tall, pale youth was rarely seen in the little Hôtel on the Boulevard Malesherbes. He would occasionally, wearing his school uniform, rush up the staircase, and after paying his mother a brief visit, such as he might have paid to a stranger, he would hurry away and join at the corner of the street an old lady who would snatch his arm and drag him off as if from untold dangers. This was Madame Marsy, his grandmother.

It was she who had brought up the lad, she and a good fellow, François Charriere by name, a sculptor who had thrown away his life in an artistic point of view, but who had plenty of work, such as it was, and who made models for the manufacturers of lamps in la Rue St. Louis in the *Marais*. This Charriere acted as guardian and tutor to the son of his old comrade Marsy. He had given a promise to this friend whom he had lost.

With the exception of the mother and the friend,

no one in Paris remembered the life and the death of Philippe Marsy. All small scandals are in the end confounded and lost in the whirl of Parisian life. Sabine's name was only mentioned now with flattering homage, and if occasional allusions were vaguely made to a mysterious past, these only seemed to add another attraction to the mistress of a salon whose charming hospitality she was always ready to dispense. For some time Sabine Marsy's salon had been spoken of as a sort of rendezvous where one was certain of meeting those persons one was most desirous of seeing — where, in short, everybody was as sure to be as in the corridor of the theatre on the first night of a new play. Sabine's salon was regarded as a worthy competitor of Madame Evans', which was looked upon as almost official, as well as of the serious and almost Calvinistic salons of the Alsatian colony.

Sabine had needed all her tact, strong will and perseverance to attain this much desired consummation of her wishes. Her aim had been more difficult for her to reach than it would have been for almost any other woman, inasmuch as she had no official relations. She was connected almost exclusively with the world of artists. But some of the painters who stood highest on the social ladder had brought to her house some clever political Athenians, art amateurs, brilliant talkers and good looking men, who asserted boldly, like Vaudrey, that a republic can have no strong basis except through women, that women alone, for example, had made Orléanism, and these delightful men had taken posses-

sion of the salon which Madame Marsy opened to them with so much hospitality. It is an easy thing in Paris to have a salon if one has a good cook. Squares of Bristol board engraved by Stern and sent through the post to good addresses, attract with somewhat disconcerting ease a cloud of guests, who circulate around a buffet like flies around honey.

Paris is a population of guests.

And then Madame Marsy was so charming! She was always on the track of some new celebrity. Her scent was as keen as that of a hunting dog, and her ear and eye as alert as those of a sportsman.

She read as her first duty each day, all the long columns of the *Journal Officiel* in order to divine in the orators of to-day the Ministers of to-morrow. She informed herself in advance in regard to the painter or sculptor who was to carry away the medal from the Salon, and was the first to invite him, and show that she had discovered him.

In Literature she protected the new school, liking it for the noise it made and excitement it created. She wished to give her salon a literary character as well as a political coloring. Artists and statesmen elbowed each other there.

She had been for some days organizing a reception, at which she intended to offer her friends a surprise. She had been told of Japanese representations given elsewhere, and she determined to have a soirée such as had never before been seen in Paris, an absolute exotic. It so happened that a friend of Guy de Lissac,

Monsieur José de Rosas, a man whom she too had once known, had just returned to France after a voyage around the world. She was in luck! If Monsieur de Rosas would consent she would be able to announce to her friends a most attractive entertainment. A lecture from a man like de Rosas could not but be enchanting.

"The Comtesse d'Horville gives her literary matinées," said Sabine, quite fired by the new idea. "Madame Evan has poems and tragedies read at her house, why should I not have my lecturers, I should like to know!"

Of course, even a Spanish grandee must yield when a woman insists, and Monsieur de Rosas, urged moreover by Guy de Lissac, agreed to relate to this Parisian public his many adventures in the various lands through which he had wandered. The invitations were issued. Madame Marsy had obtained the promise of three Ministers, and had announced them. She came very near putting their names on the programmes. She had—a most unexpected success—induced Monsieur Pichereau, Puritan as he was, to come to this soiree which was already spoken of in the newspapers, and then all at once and in the most unlooked for manner there came a Ministerial crisis—a crisis which every one pronounced utterly unnecessary—Granet pulled down Pichereau and became minister in his place; Pichereau fell but Granet did not take his place. A new Ministry was hastily organized with Sulpice Vaudrey as Minister of the Interior instead of Pichereau.

And all the ministers who had promised to come to hear de Rosas at Madame Marsy's fell with Pichereau.

"Upon my word," cried Sabine, in a towering rage, "it was a Ministry of cards!"

"A Ministry of pasteboard!" answered Guy de Lissac.

Madame Marsy was quite heart broken. That wretched Granet! Why could he not have waited just a week or ten days longer. It would have been such a simple thing to wait before he upset the Pichereau Ministry until after the soirée. Granet had been altogether in too great a hurry to become Minister. She had always understood him, she said. He was too ambitious, and the result was that she was now left without a Minister to present to her guests.

She did not know one of the new Ministers. She had spoken once to the President of the Council, Collard, the Nantes lawyer, at a reception at the Elysée. Collard, as he passed, had torn the lace on her robe —he made his apologies with charming grace. But this did not authorize her to invite him abruptly to her salon and add to its reputation by his presence.

Her intimate friend, the pretty Madame Gerson, who assisted her to do the honors of her house while awaiting the hour when she herself might set up a rival salon and invite her own guests, told her over and over again that Pichereau would come. He was a man of his word, and could be trusted. He would bring with him his old colleagues.

But what did Pichereau now matter to Sabine!

What were ex-Ministers to her? She always had more on hand than she could manage, and did not choose that her salon should be called Les Invalides, as that of one of her rivals had received the appellation of "The Rejected." No, this was not to her mind! And again she grumbled and fretted over Granet, who had so thoughtlessly disarranged all her plans.

And Madame Marsy, sitting in the *loge* with Madame Gerson, whose brilliant brunette beauty brought out Sabine's delicate blonde coloring, listened with a mournful, wearied expression to the first acts of l'Africaine. Monsieur Gerson was talking in a low voice to Guy de Lissac, who shared the hospitality of the *loge*, when, at the end of the second act, in the manager's box, Sulpice Vaudrey's smiling face appeared suddenly by the side of Granet's waxed moustache.

"Look," said Lissac, "there is Vaudrey now!"

Madame Marsy had already seen him, and was examining through her glass this new Minister whose blonde beard carefully combed, spread over his white cravat on either side his face, his silken moustache and a little triumphant air added to his attractions. Sabine saw the Minister move forward from the back of the *loge* where he was in shadow, and as he leaned a little over the red velvet balustrade to inspect the house, she detected on the top of his head, although he was only forty, a small bald spot among the crisp waves of his blonde hair.

"Ah!" said Sabine, "I thought he was dark!"

"Oh, no," answered Lissac; "he was singularly fair when we were students together."

Madame Marsy turned quickly in her chair as if touched by an electric spark, and showed Guy a charming face smiling over the most beautiful shoulders in the world.

"What! do you know the new Minister as intimately as that?"

"As intimately as possible!"

"Then," cried Sabine, "I ask the greatest possible service at your hands. No, I do not ask it, my dear Lissac, I demand it."

There was a smile on Madame Gerson's Andalusian face.

"I know what it is!" she said.

"So do I," answered Lissac. "You wish me to present to you the new Minister of the Interior? You have a Prefect to name."

"Not in the least; I merely wish to replace Pichereau! Ah! my dear Lissac—my good Lissac"—she said, in the sweetest possible voice, clasping her daintily gloved hands with the air of a child begging for a plaything, "I implore you to induce Monsieur Vaudrey to accept the invitation which you must give him from me, and I shall look upon you as a perfect love. Do you hear, Lissac, as a perfect love."

Guy rose instantly, and with one hand opened his opera hat while with the other he turned the handle of the door of the *loge*, saying, as he did so:

"Please notice that I make no conditions, but simply obey.

Sabine laughed.

"Ah!" she said, "you are discretion itself."

"Silika is cold by your side!" cried Lissac as he disappeared through the open door. "I will bring you your Minister in ten minutes."

Sabine waited nervously. The curtain had fallen on the third act. The Manager's *loge* was empty. Guy had undoubtedly joined Vaudrey, and neither the Minister nor his friend were to be seen. At this moment there was a gentle tap on the door of Sabine's *loge*. Monsieur Gerson, weary of a rapid succession of soirées and fetes, was half asleep in his corner, but on a sign from his wife rushed to open it. It was a painter, an old friend of Philippe Marsy's, who came to beg Sabine to come to his atelier "to admire" the picture he was to send to the Salon. Sabine received him in her most charming manner and gave her promise, but she was nervous and impatient, and moved her fan hastily to and fro as she listened to the long prelude to the fourth act played by the orchestra. Suppose Lissac should not succeed! Suddenly in the open doorway appeared Guy's elegant profile. He stood a little aside to allow a man to pass who entered with a charming smile and a profound bow, as Lissac said to Sabine:

"Permit me, Madame, to present to you the Minister of the Interior."

Sabine, all flushed and radiant, saw no one among the number of men who followed the Minister, but the Minister himself.

She rose and pushed back her chair instinctively. Madame Gerson did the same, as did Gerson himself. Sabine was triumphant, Madame Gerson curious, and Gerson, though half asleep, much pleased and flattered.

Vaudrey seated himself by the side of Sabine with the easy air of a man who was enchanted at an opportunity of making himself agreeable. This visit, made as it was at the solicitation of a friend, to a greatly admired woman, seemed to him the natural result of his political success and of the new power which had been his only a few days.

He went everywhere instinctively that incense was to be offered him. It seemed to him that he was floating on the most delightful sea; every thing was charming; he did not wish to refuse anything to anybody. It was the most natural thing in the world, that a woman of fashion like Sabine should wish to congratulate him—even if she did not know him.

He felt beside that he was in an atmosphere of sympathetic admiration, these two pretty women smiled upon him with charming amiability and gratitude. And Sabine seemed to him especially delightful when she said with the grace of a true Parisian:

"I can find no words with which to thank my friend, Monsieur de Lissac, for having so kindly induced you to listen to my entreaties—"

"Your entreaties, Madame?" answered the Minister, with an air which seemed to say that his yes was quite ready to follow.

"It is simply, your Excellency, that I wish to induce you to be present at a little réunion."

"A réunion?" repeated Vaudrey, with a smile.

"Has not Monsieur de Lissac told you, then, what I ventured to hope?"

"We are old friends, Lissac and I, and this, Madame, is not the first time that I have heard him speak of you, and I shall be only too happy to do anything in my power for you or yours."

Sabine smiled at this pretty speech, which was not badly conceived or awkwardly uttered.

Who was it who had told her a day or two before that Vaudrey was a provincial? Was it an intimate enemy or an intimate friend? At all events, he was quite charming, this Vaudrey, and had little of the provincial about him!

"Well, then, your Excellency, Monsieur de Rosas has kindly promised to come to me next Saturday evening, and to relate, in an easy way, his adventures on his journey around the world. He would be immensely flattered, I am sure, to know that among his audience—"

Sulpice cut short the impending compliment he saw on the lips of Madame Marsy.

He knew Monsieur de Rosas. He had seen translations by that illustrious and literary gentleman from Persian poets which had been printed for private circulation. He had often met him at the réunions of certain learned Societies; Monsieur de Rosas was a man of eminence whom he would be rejoiced to see again. A hero of romance as learned as a Benedictine monk! It was really most edifying.

The portrait of Rosas was thus quickly sketched, and with so much vigor and clearness that Sabine nodded approval again and again. Vaudrey liked to talk, and to greet smiles with smiles. As he talked he looked between these two beautiful women, one so fair and the other so richly dark, down on the immense auditorium, all crimson and gold, and blazing with lights. He beheld one sea of heads. From this crowd his eyes wandered to the boxes, where gleaming shoulders, white arms, and heads dressed with flowers and plumes; glittering jewels and sparkling glances rewarded his lingering gaze. It seemed to him that the very atmosphere was intoxicating.

On the stage he saw rose-colored slippers and billowy skirts, silver helmets, gleaming armor and spangles, all irradiated by that wonderful electric light. He felt as if all this were a fête given to celebrate his entrance on the arena of public life.

Then, in a momentary outburst of his candid joy, he began to talk very frankly to this woman, to Guy and to Gerson, almost as if he were talking to himself. To the accompaniment of this Hindoo music he unfolded his projects and his dreams. He answered in this way Sabine's congratulations.

"Then, Monsieur Le Ministre," she said, "you are going to do great things?"

With his eyes fixed on the stage he smilingly replied:

"The truth is, Madame, I accepted this position only as a duty, and as the means of doing good. I should like to be just, I should like to be kind. I should like

to find honest and unappreciated merit, in order to place it where it deserves to be, and to do my best to repair the inequalities of Fate. If we cannot do better than our predecessors, it was unnecessary to disturb them!

"It strikes me," said Lissac, while Madame Marsy approved with smiles and gestures, "you and your colleagues are enjoying a Ministerial honeymoon!"

"Which we propose to prolong as much as possible," answered Sulpice, laughing. "I am inclined to believe that in a Ministry, as well as in marriage, it is their own fault when the moon is clouded over."

As Vaudrey spoke he thought involuntarily of that Adrienne, that lovely woman who was his own, and who was now impatiently expecting him in those vast apartments where they had so recently installed themselves.

He was eager to go to her, that he might relate all that had taken place that evening—yes, all, even his visit to the Coulisses, and yet he lingered, feeling it somewhat awkward to leave Madame Marsy, who had instinctively divined that Vaudrey was in haste to depart.

"I am only waiting to hear that wonderful passage, and then we will go," she had said to Guy.

Vaudrey made no remark but quietly waited until Sabine rose, and then offered her his arm to place her in the carriage.

The corridors were crowded; everybody wished to see the Minister. People saluted him on all sides; it

seemed to Vaudrey that he was most cordially greeted. Lissac followed with Madame Gerson on his arm. Her husband came after, longing to reach home that he might have a few hours of sleep.

The January night was clear and cold, and Sulpice, well wrapped in his fur coat, stood with Sabine still on his arm, waiting until her coupé should come up, which it did presently, closely followed by another with no crest upon it, but most quiet and unassuming in appearance. This was the Minister's carriage.

Sulpice looked down the Avenue de l'Opéra, with its long lines of shining lights, and again he had the strange feeling that they blazed for him.

Vaudrey placed Sabine in her carriage.

She said to him:

"Will Madame Vaudrey do me the honor to accompany you? I will do myself the pleasure of calling upon her to-morrow, and make my request in person."

The Minister bowed acquiescence.

Sabine thanked him once more in another charming smile, her slender hand drew up the window of the coupé, and the carriage rolled away.

"Adieu!" cried Lissac to Vaudrey.

"May I not offer you a seat in my carriage?"

"Thanks, I am only a step or two from la Rue d'Aumale."

Vaudrey turned toward Madame Gerson, who bowed; her husband bowed much lower.

"May I not set you down, Madame?"

"You are very kind, your Excellency. We have our coupé here, however."

"Au revoir," said Vaudrey to Lissac. "Come and breakfast with me to-morrow."

"Most gladly."

"Home!" was the order given by Sulpice to the coachman as he entered his carriage.

He sank into his seat with profound enjoyment. He was glad to be alone again. All the various things he had seen were dancing through his brain in wild confusion. He was still haunted by the odors of that *Foyer*—his nostrils were full of it, and he saw again the soft blue eyes of the young danseuse.

These nods and becks, and wreathed smiles, these women's voices, Sabine's caressing tones, Madame Gerson's white teeth were all mingled in joyous confusion, and the one word "arrived" detached itself from all else like a clear clarion call from a bugle.

He still heard Guy's voice crying joyously:

"You have arrived!"

Arrived! Could it be possible?

Yes, it was true. He was Minister, and at the head of this crowd of officials. He pulled the wires of all this administrative machinery, he, the lawyer from Grenoble, whose ambition only ten years ago was to be a shining light in the Department of Isère.

All these people whom he saw in the brightly lighted Boulevard, buying their newspapers were about to read his name, and a full description of his appearance and manners.

"Monsieur Vaudrey is settled in La Place Beauvau. Monsieur Vaudrey received this morning the various

Chefs de Bureau. Monsieur Vaudrey is much occupied in examining the accounts of the Prefects and Sub-Prefects. He is assisted by Monsieur Henri Jacquier (de l'Oise)."

Everywhere, on every page, in every column, the name of Vaudrey appeared—his acts, his words! his intentions and his projects!

"Yes; he had arrived!"

Never in his most ambitious dreams had he dared to picture to himself such gigantic elevation, nor such brilliancy for the star which he had so often sought in the sky with the superstition of the ambitious. Now it would be seen of what he was capable. He had formerly, in some of his arguments in the court-room of his native village, shown the metal of which he was made, particularly at the time of the war and during the Electoral excitement of 1871; again, too, at Versailles, during years of dissension. Those who knew him predicted that there was in him the making of a statesman, but the touchstone of men is power. He had now emerged from his semi-obscurity into the full light of the rising sun, and could, at length, show what he could do. He could order and create. He could thrill the whole nation with his thoughts. Yes, he had arrived! Sulpice beheld the realization of his wildest dreams.

And while the Ministerial carriage rolled at full speed toward La Place de Beauvau, Sabine, wrapped closely in her furs, her delicate cheeks and arms caressed by the blue fox border of her pelisse, said to herself,

perfectly indifferent to the man, but enchanted at having enrolled the Minister on her list of guests:

"He is a simple fellow, this Vaudrey, but he is none the less charming!"

The gate at La Place de Beauvau opened before the carriage of Monsieur Le Ministre. The sand sounded under the wheels, and the coupé stopped at the left under the steps which led to the private apartments of the Ministry.

Sulpice stepped out of the coupé, the doors were thrown open before him. Two servants, with white cravats, were seated on the bench in the hall waiting for the return of His Excellency.

Sulpice lightly ascended the stone stairs which led to his apartment. He handed his overcoat to a valet in the anteroom and in the best of spirits entered the small salon, where by a shaded lamp Madame Vaudrey was sitting reading the Review while waiting for him. When Vaudrey saw her graceful head, her soft color and large blue eyes, when he met her smile and heard the sweet voice in which lurked a faint tinge of uneasiness, her husband stooped and with both hands lifted her face. Over her fair brow her light curls were wandering; he pushed them aside, and pressed his lips, which were unusually hot, upon it.

"I have been greatly amused, my dear Adrienne," he said. "All this sympathy with which I am greeted, this impression of joy which the new Minister seems to create, even Pichereau's grimace, for I met him, all this, I say, I find immensely amusing; it pleases while

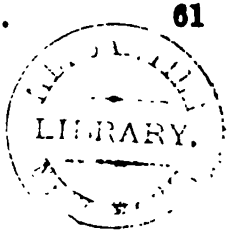
at the same time it frightens me a little. You do not know of what I was thinking when I came in?"

"No, dear, of what?" answered his wife, lifting her gentle eyes to his.

"I was saying to myself that it did not suffice to be a Minister, it was necessary to be a great one. You hear, Adrienne, a great Minister!"

He took Adrienne's hands in his, while she gazed with intense admiration at this man who said to her with hope aud exultation, "I wish to be great." She had not dreamed of all this long ago, when her fingers were grasped in the hand of her fiancé, when Sulpice whispered in her ear only one thing, which thrilled her with joy:

"I love you, Adrienne. I shall never cease to love you."



CHAPTER III.

A LOVE MATCH.

SULPICE VAUDREY had married Adrienne for love. She brought him from out her convent at Grenoble, the ignorance of a young girl and the devotion of a woman. She was an orphan and her fortune was not inconsiderable, but Sulpice though far from rich, had never inquired the amount of the girl's dowry when he asked Adrienne's hand from her guardian, Dr. Reboux. Sulpice had met Mademoiselle Gerard at more than one soirée in Grenoble when she sat quiet and reserved, looking from person to person with a gentle glance of inquiry. A few words, hastily exchanged, music heard as they sat side by side, were the only ties which bound them together; the very timidity of the girl was signally attractive to Sulpice. He was free and alone in the world, for he had not long before buried the one being whom he loved, his mother, whose son he was twice over, by the flesh and by the soul, by the milk with which she had fed him, and by the long and patient instructions she had given him.

Of his father he remembered little, only a dreamy, delicate face—a slender figure in his lawyer's robe, before whom he had hesitatingly stammered the word "papa" much as if he were saying a prayer.

Entirely isolated in the small town of Grenoble, for which he had left his native village, *Saint Laurent du Pont*, he had fallen a prey to a fixed melancholy at the time he first met Adrienne. He was then thirty-four. With the exception of the years he had spent in Paris, when completing his legal studies on the left bank of the Seine, he had always lived in the country. He had grown up in an old house, where each familiar corner reminded him of some happy moment, either in his childhood or his youth. He remembered the Salon finished in white enamel in the style of Louis XVI., which opened on the terrace from which steps descended into the garden. He remembered the old ancestral portraits, advocates in powdered wigs and black gowns, fat and rosy, with their double chins supported by their huge white cravats. There were sweet faces, too, with extraordinary coiffures and big flowered robes, smiling down from their oval frames. He recalled even the books with their quaint, old-fashioned bindings, reposing behind glass doors in the immense library or lying on the tables among guns and gamebags.

It was this dear home of which he thought so often, that contained all his Past—all the poetry of his life. He saw it all again in each detail, the large kitchen, with its stone flags, where he had heard many a fairy tale from the old servants, and the room above with its heavy serge curtains, where he lay alone often shivering with fear. This room was next the vacant one once occupied by his father, and the moonlight coming in through bare branches of the tall trees in the court-

yard threw strange quivering shadows on the wall opposite his bed, and Sulpice lying there often fancied that he heard the noise of the fantastic chase, of which old Catherine, the cook, had spoken with terror that same evening below in the kitchen.

He went back to this home to spend his vacation each year, his mother having the courage to live apart from him and to place him where she felt it was most desirable that he should be, just as in winter when a child, she had been in the habit of giving him a cold bath. She placed him, therefore, at the Lyceum in Grenoble, from whence he returned to her from time to time, "altogether too thin, poor child!" as she frequently said.

Ah! these were precious memories, those sunny days in the mountains, those trips to La Grande Chartreuse, that sound of brooks rippling and gurgling over the rocks—those halls near the *Guiers-Mort*, under the trees in the still silence of the hot noon—the long hours of reading lying in a meadow—reading often interrupted to gaze at the light clouds passing over the blue sky. How delightful those days were, days peopled with visions and fancies, when the ripple of a mountain brook running over the stones was as soothing as the sweet lullaby of a nurse!

Sulpice did not then know where he was going, what he would do, nor what he would make of himself, but he indulged in hope as bright as the sky itself, and had a great longing for an opportunity to distinguish himself. He wondered if he had best become a mission-

ary or an orator. It seemed to him that his heart was large enough to take in a whole world, and he asked himself over and over again if he should ever be loved.

To be loved was now his favorite dream.

When he asked this question at college of his room-mate, Guy de Lissac, who was the son of a gentleman farmer in the neighborhood, the youth replied:

"Is not every one loved sooner or later? And some persons are, I fancy, loved more than they wish to be!"

Sulpice had acquired from this patriarchal education, whose Puritan rigidity was softened by his mother's tenderness, a certain poetical element which had never deserted him. Even during the time of his most assiduous toil in Paris, and now in the open arena of his political life, his thoughts continually wandered to the deserted dwelling at *Saint-Laurent-du-Pont*, to the empty arm-chair, where the father, whose kisses he had never known, had formerly sat, to the broad staircase with its oaken balustrade, from whence his mother's tender voice had called him. He saw once more the wide landscape, the gray Guinea fowl on the branches of the elms, and drank in the intoxicating odor of the grapes as the bare-legged vintagers trod them in the press. And Deputy or Minister, Sulpice constantly thought of this quiet corner of the world which seemed to him so sweet and calm after the tumult and confusion of Paris.

As a rule the farmers of Dauphiné rarely bring up their sons as agriculturists. They send them to school and expect them to study faithfully, and later to col-

lege or to the law or medical schools, from whence they return to the paternal roof to be greeted with joy and affection. Forms well developed by out of door exercise, strong and healthy, these country bred youths think no more of their harvests than they do of the wind sighing among the poplars on the river shore.

Sulpice had an old uncle, who proposed to his sister-in-law to bequeath all he had, fields and farms—a large possession—to Sulpice if his nephew would become his son-in-law. Sulpice refused; he did not choose to marry for money.

"Such nonsense!" said his uncle. "The most absurd sentimentality! If he begins this way he will not go very far, that is certain."

"You are mistaken, my dear brother-in-law. That which time did not permit my poor Raymond to become, his son shall be—a brilliant, clever and honest lawyer!"

"Yes, I dare say, but he shall not have my daughter!" answered the uncle.

Sulpice, after studying law in Paris, returned to Grenoble; his mother tore herself away from the old house at Saint Laurent, and went to him. He was admitted to the bar at Grenoble, attracted considerable attention when he pleaded his first cause, and every one was astonished that he had not chosen Paris as his field.

And why had he not done so? Because he loved Dauphiné, because he loved the shores of the Isore, the healthful poetry of the *Désert* and *La Chartreuse*, as well as the snows of the *Grand-Som*. A man of talent could

make a place for himself anywhere—and then, too, he felt it almost a duty not to leave this spot, but to utter there bold words of freedom. Sulpice had received from his mother his father's manuscripts and books—a certain Encyclopædia, in which Raymond Vaudrey had written marginal notes and reflections, all more or less tinged with aspirations for Liberty. He had carefully studied the history of the previous eighty years—he was familiar with the burning words of Mirabeau, Barnave and Condorcet, a son of Grenoble — words which, like lava, were still hot and smoking under the crust of years. His heart beat high as he read them. He saw visions of tri-colored banners waving in the sunlight, of crowds wild with enthusiasm, of processions moving to and fro, of great truths proclaimed aloud for the world to hear.

His mother smiled at his enthusiasm, but did not try to calm it. Years would do that soon enough, and bear it away as an October wind strips the leaves from the trees. And then, too, these hopes and visions the dear woman gladly shared, in memory of her Raymond who was no more, and whom she had adored.

The breaking out of the war and the crumbling of the Empire found Sulpice Vaudrey popular at Grenoble, beloved by all—by the people, who knew him to be generous, and by the middle class, who guessed him to be prudent and wise. The February vote sent him to Bordeaux to the National Assembly. He was then thirty-four. His mother lived to see this entering wedge into the Future. With what poignant emotion

Vaudrey still recalled that Sunday in February—a damp, unhealthy February—when he returned in a close carriage with a friend from his Electoral campaign. The evening before, he had addressed a crowd of peasants in a wine shop. They had listened to him with their mouths open, suspicious and curious, examining their candidate as they would have examined cattle at market. By degrees their distrust was conquered, and after applauding him vehemently they extended their hard and horny hands, saying, vociferously: "You are our man!"

Sulpice had returned that morning to Grenoble through the rain, driving through village after village, and seeing huge placards bearing his name and those of his friends, swinging in the wind, half torn from the wall and dripping with water.

In front of the mayor's offices groups were gathered, bulletins were scattered in the mud, a police officer walked up and down, but there was no excitement, no fever. The pulses of these men who cast the lot of their country all upon a vote, throbbed no faster, and Sulpice could not but be astonished at such apathy, and wondered if everywhere in France it was the same.

That evening, with what anxiety he was at the Palais de Justice when the returns came in. His heart beat quickly, and he was nearly suffocated as he found how he stood. Dispatches came pouring in, messengers appeared waving their papers above their heads, and Sulpice heard from every lip the same cry:

"Vaudrey is ahead! Vaudrey has it!"

The crowd hurrahed and clapped their hands. They summoned Sulpice. He felt himself swept away by this enthusiasm as by the waves of the sea.

A friend took him by the arm and, drawing him into a corner, said, hastily:

"You know I shall never ask much of anything at your hands, or rather I shall never ask anything. I count only on one especial Receivership. You will attend to that, I am sure?"

And Sulpice, all quivering with emotion, felt his heart grow cold with anger against this petitioner who, in the triumph of a great cause, saw only a means of arriving at his own personal aims. The Deputy—for it was settled Sulpice was Deputy by the unanimous vote of each Commune—the Deputy was filled with disgust.

The crowd accompanied him to his home that night with cries of triumph.

Amid all his joy Sulpice felt, nevertheless, that he had one painful duty to fulfil. The Treaty of Peace was to be signed, and at what a price! Was it necessary that he should set his name on a paper which consecrated the amputation of his country? He sat at his window the greater part of the night, buried in thought, with his feverish brow pressed against the cold glass. He at last threw himself on his couch, but, unable to sleep, rose again in the gray light of a February dawn.

He looked out. On the other side of the street was a Convent garden, laid out in regular squares, bordered with box. Leafless trees stretched out their angu-

lar branches. Sisters in black robes moved slowly within these walls, which for so many years had been their horizon. He should see no more this well-known corner, this sad and dreary garden, the cloistral quiet of which had always pleased him.

Now it was Paris to which he must hasten—Paris with all its haste and fever, with its atmosphere of saltpetre. Sulpice was eager to walk once more on those burning pavements, under those attics where he had, when a young student, indulged in so many fair visions. But he should never cease to regret that old Convent garden, the well-known flower beds, and the profound silence in which it was enveloped. He should always remember that open window at which he had sat at work—the rush of a bird as it flew past, and the voices of the Sisters as they sang their canticles.

It was during the following years between two sessions of the Assembly that he had married Mademoiselle Gérard.

Dr. Reboux was enchanted to give his ward to a man of the future, like Vaudrey, and had not evinced the smallest hesitation. Adrienne charmed Sulpice, and the young girl was only too happy in seeing herself the choice of this young and elegant man of whom every one spoke well, even his adversaries themselves. Brilliant dark eyes gave a singular charm to his thin, fair face. He wore a full beard; his forehead was high, with a deep line between the two brows, and this line gave a look of thought to his face. In short, Sulpice

was singularly pleasing. He was not a handsome man, nor a good looking youth, but he was very delightful, a brilliant conversationalist, enthusiastic, persuasive and alert, knowing a great deal and showing this knowledge without pedantry. He was in short well calculated to inspire a young girl with an all absorbing passion. Adrienne married with joy the man who had asked her hand for love only.

And all the poetry of his youth blossomed again, in this man who forgot in his home all the tempests of Versailles, all political anxieties, the terror of the Future, the disquietude of the Present. Vaudrey often dwelt in his thoughts on that summer morning when he took Adrienne to church. It reminded him of a pleasant halt on a weary journey. He remembered the old house full of noise, relatives in their best garments, and crowds of friends. He heard again the horses at the open door as they pawed the ground with impatience. He saw the neighbors at their windows and the children at play in the streets. It was like a ray of sunlight when Adrienne, in her white dress, entered the vast salon where old portraits of dead grandmothers in leg-of-mutton sleeves, seemed to smile down upon her. Her sweet face crowned by her wreath of orange blossoms had the happy, faintly troubled and somewhat astonished expression of a young communicant enveloped in her white vail. She came forward with a deep blush and gently gave him her slender hands gloved in white. He, a little disturbed by the gaze of all the spectators, glanced involuntarily into a mirror

and thought himself very awkward, and his hair too smoothly combed. How heartily they had laughed since at these delightful memories.

Sulpice needed only the presence of his mother, who alas! was now no more, to complete his happiness, when the old priest who had taught Adrienne her catechism, extended the paten for him to kiss. It was a great event in Grenoble, to see the chief of the Liberals, the victor in the last elections, married in church like any believing bourgeois. And the organ played with tender vibrations some sweet marriage hymn, echoing like an Hallelujah down centuries of time. The light streamed through the windows upon Adrienne as she knelt, her child-like brow buried in her gloved hands, upon her fair hair, and the shimmering satin of the skirt as it lay along the carpet.

Of this ceremony which filled the great church, Sulpice carried away only a vague impression of the jar of the organ, the perfume of flowers, and the gleaming sunlight coming through the stained glass of the windows.

It seemed to him now a long time ago. More than six years had passed since that day, six years of constant struggle for Vaudrey—years in which he had made a gallant fight, defending his opinions with warm eloquence, disputing every inch of ground, working incessantly, and living in Paris precisely as he had formerly lived in the country, surrounded by the same books which he had placed in the apartment in the Chausseé d'Antin, near the railroad which he took every morning.

He always left Adrienne with reluctance—the Adrienne to whom he returned every evening when political meetings and prolonged sessions did not rob him of those precious hours which were in reality the only ones in which he lived.

Adrienne went out very little. She was not fond of society, and she too lived in Paris much as she had at Grenoble, in a calm and tranquil isolation, having no other care and interest than her husband's life, his work and his discourses which he prepared with so much laborious courage. He generally worked far into the night, comparing authorities, and consulting different books and old parliamentary annals.

She was sometimes alarmed at the steadiness with which Sulpice applied himself to his work. She would have liked to share it, and was sad because she could render him no assistance. She wanted to write for him at his dictation, and look through these huge volumes for him. She felt the most abject terror when Vaudrey was to speak in the Tribune. She did not dare to go to hear him, and yet, knowing that he was to speak she had not the courage to remain at home. Quivering from head to foot with anxiety, she entered the public Tribune. She felt as if she should faint, when she heard amid the profound silence, the voice of the president, saying:

"Monsieur Vaudrey has the floor."

It seemed to her that her husband's voice had an unnatural sound, and she asked herself if terror had grasped him by the throat. She dared not look at him,

It seemed to her that people were not listening, that they were laughing, coughing and shuffling their feet. Why had she come? She would never again step her foot within those walls. She shivered with the cold. Then all at once a storm of bravos rent the air. She half rose and leaning on the rail, she looked over the sea of heads and saw her husband. He was standing just above an arm-chair, where a man in a white coat sat calm and undisturbed. With his head a little thrown back, Sulpice was thundering out his determination and his faith.

She sank back in her seat, proud of the man whose name she bore. She, too, would gladly have cried out to all those about her, that she belonged to him, that she adored him and that he loved her. She wanted to throw her arms about his neck and say to him before all these people "I love you!"

But it was for his home that she reserved all her tenderness, for it was needed to calm this enthusiast who was so often depressed, nervous or over-excited. This great man, as they said at Grenoble, was to her like a child whom she adored and cared for with all the devotion of a daughter and the tenderness of a mother.

Vaudrey, meanwhile, ambitious of much more than power, wearing out his life in these battles at the Chamber, saw time pass and days flit by without feeling that he had made the smallest progress or taken one step toward the aim he had created for himself.

Since the war, to him as to all others of his genera-

tion, the years had passed with marvellous rapidity, and all at once, after saying to himself that a man of thirty had a future before him, he awoke one fine day to the fact that he was forty.

Forty years old! Sulpice felt a certain involuntary melancholy, and tired of playing a second rôle, determined to take the first and play on the front of the stage, in the full blaze of the lights.

In the home which Adrienne made for him he was unquestionably very happy. She comforted him, brought his enthusiasm down to the level of reality, while she herself, was often terrified at his brief fits of passion and his discouragement, and still more at his illusions in regard to men and things.

Sulpice reproached her often with cutting the wings of his dreams.

"Not I!" she answered, "it is only your windmills which I break, my dear Don Quixote!"

She only aspired to be the sympathetic, devoted friend of this man who, she said to herself, was so greatly her superior. Yet by her great love and in spite of her ignorance of all political intrigue, she was, nevertheless, the best counsellor he could possibly have. She was filled with joy whenever Vaudrey listened to her and acted on her suggestions.

"I love him so dearly!" she said, with the abandon of a poor being who has in the world only one affection, one pretext for living.

He saw in this life only shadows, his youth thrown away, his banished hopes, his fears and the disgust

inspired by the perpetual chicanery of politics. Idolized and beloved as he was, it yet seemed to him that he lacked something in his life. He had wanted a child, a boy to educate, some especial personal duty, since the political situation prevented him from fulfilling a civil duty. Ah! yes, a son, a being to cherish, a brow to kiss, a soul to fashion in the image of his own soul, a child who should know in life none of the burthens borne by others of his generation.

Perhaps it was only the child that was lacking—but it was clear there was something. He was, nevertheless, still deeply in love with this young creature who was only twenty-five, as slender and timid as a child, who, accustomed to silence and loneliness of her guardian's house, now in her husband's cabinet in Paris arranged his books and papers with her own hands and did her best to surround her beloved Sulpice with the beatitudes of a comfortable bourgeois life.

There came all at once to this tranquil household the news of a sudden and startling change in the political world. Sulpice came home one night excited, nervous, but at the same time very happy.

He was spoken of everywhere in connection with the new Ministry. His last discourse on the policy of the Interior, which had brought him more into notice than ever before, was supposed to have been uttered with a view to the present Ministerial crisis, and to have had no small share in promoting it.

Minister! Yes, he could become Minister as soon as he pleased. His policy was in the ascendant.

The lawyer, Collard, (from Nantes) who was mentioned as the future Chief of the Cabinet, was one of his intimate friends, and there was much talk of entrusting Sulpice Vaudrey with a portfolio—and with one of the most important too, that of the Interior or that of Foreign Affairs. These two were called the "great portfolios;" the others, of Public Education, which watched over the souls of the people, and of Commerce, which arranged how these people shall be fed, being only "minor portfolios."

Sulpice told all this to Adrienne at table, where he ate mechanically without the smallest appetite. There was a meeting of his Division at eight o'clock. It was now seven, and he was in haste.

Adrienne thought him very pale. She felt very strangely. She was glad, but at the same time very anxious. Politics took her husband from her side so often and for so long a time, and condemned her to a life of such solitude that she had begun to grow weary of it, and to ask herself if it were to go on forever in this same way. But all this preoccupation disappeared before the evident joy of her husband. He was in a state of feverish expectation. It seemed to him that this was the most decisive moment of his life.

The door-bell pealing through the house caused him to start.

A servant coming into the dining-room, handed to Vaudrey a letter, on the corner of which was written the two words, "In haste."

Sulpice recognized the writing.

It was Collard (from Nantes) who sent it.

Adrienne saw her husband's face suddenly flush as he read this letter. He quickly handed it to her with his eyes flashing with joy.

"It is done. Read."

Adrienne was deathly pale.

Collard informed his colleague that the Ministerial party, of which he was the chief, was dissolved. The President was at the Elyseés awaiting the new Ministers. He offered Vaudrey the Portfolio of the Interior.

"A Minister!" said Adrienne, in great delight.

Vaudrey rose and, with his napkin still in his hand, seemed to be looking for something.

"My hat!" he said. "My overcoat. A carriage."

Adrienne, with her hands clasped, looked at him with ecstatic admiration. He seemed in her eyes to have undergone a sudden transformation. In fact, he was entirely radiant. He embraced Adrienne with energy a dozen times, and ran as lightly down the stairs as if he were a young lover keeping an appointment with his mistress.

This honey-moon of politics was still at its height on the evening that Vaudrey, who saw everything now through rose-colored spectacles, paid his first visit to the *Foyer* of the ballet dancers. He had entered into power with absolute faith in himself and others. It seemed to him that it was his mission to reform the world, regenerate the Administration and destroy abuses.

"It is difficult to be a Minister," he said with a smile, "but nothing is easier than to be a great Minister! It is only necessary to wish to be one."

"And to be able to carry out the wish," answered his friend Granet, ironically.

To be able, did he say? But what was simpler since Vaudrey had all power in his hands. If the others had failed to carry out the hopes of their friends, it was, of course, because they had not dared, because they had not wished.

Now it remained to be seen what he would do. And not to-morrow, not in a month, but to-day.

He entered upon his duties boldly, like an amiable despot eager to carry out his reforms, to remodel and change; and seized with the neophyte's fever of zeal, he, in the beginning, became entangled in the wheels of that immense machinery more eternal than empires, the Administration!

"Well, he could wait, he had plenty of time, and he must be patient."

"Time? Are you quite sure of that?" replied Granet, in his usual sarcastic tone.

From this aurora of power, which cast such rosy reflections on the ambitious hopes of Sulpice, Adrienne to her great surprise also basked in its rays. She shared without pride Vaudrey's success and now found, whatever might be her taste for retirement, that it was necessary to live less exclusively for herself and her husband, to show herself as Sulpice said, and in this necessity she finally found much pleasure, all the more that she had her husband's approval and encouragement.

When she entered a salon there was a murmur of admiration and sympathetic curiosity. The women looked at her, and the men gathered about her:

"It is Madame Vaudrey?"

"The wife of the Minister?"

"Charming!"

"So young!"

"She looks a trifle provincial!"

"All the more attractive for that!"

"That is true. She is as fresh as a nectarine!"

She did her best to win forgiveness by her smiling modesty, for the enviable position in which accident had so suddenly placed her. People said she received a compliment as a boarding-school graduate receives a prize. She was excused for having rosy cheeks by reason of the exquisite whiteness and delicacy of her hands. She did not have "too much of Grenoble" about her after all. Some clever woman called her that pretty Dauphinoise, and then some one else spoke of her as the little Dauphine.

"She has had a great success," was the final decision. The début of a woman of society in a salon being after all very like that of an actress on the stage.

It was because Vaudrey seemed so much gratified, that his wife was pleased. She had none of the vanity of power. She was alone the larger part of her time in the great deserted rooms in the Ministerial residence, and, in spite of all its luxuries, she more than once regretted that nest in the Chausseé d'Antin where he and she together—not very often to be sure, but

sometimes—had enjoyed tête-a-têtes like those which characterized the first months of their union, the long talks, the exchange of thoughts, of hopes and souvenirs. Already they spoke of souvenirs, and she sometimes said to Sulpice, who was in the best of spirits at having attained his aim:

"Do you know that it seems to me as if we were living at a Hôtel!"

"And you are right," answered Vaudrey, gayly, "we are in a Hôtel, but it is one in which the Will of France resides!"

"And you are happy, dear friend?"

"Very happy. Happy that I am able at last to make my mark. You will see, Adrienne, what I will do, and what I will become in a year!"

"In a year!"

CHAPTER IV.

A BACHELOR'S QUARTERS.

GUY DE LISSAC lived in the Rue d'Aumale, in a small pavilion which was part of the Hôtel, but at the end of a court-yard. He had given *carte-blanche* to a furnisher to arrange these bachelor's quarters. The man to whom he entrusted this task had a keen appreciation of bric-a-brac, he picked up all sorts of things at a bargain and sold them at high prices to the bankers and to the *filles* of Paris.

Lissac, who had enough taste of his own to gather together artistic trifles, found it much more convenient to awake some fine morning in a little Hôtel filled with Japanese hangings and screens, with portières of Chinese embroidery, old carvings and terra cotta figures. The furnisher had taste and Lissac had money. The *curios* were authentic, and the attractions of his room very evident.

There was something lacking however, something to indicate some one positive taste, or passion for some especial epoch, or for some especial thing, — either books or pictures. Among this host of rare and valuable articles, which lay about on the tables, where ivory Netzkés elbowed Saxe figures and Benares bronzes, the key-note was wanting, without which

it was impossible to give an air of originality to the collection.

The whole apartment, with its bed of white lacquer surmounted by a Louis Quinze baldachin, like the bed of the Queen at Trianon, was more like the dwelling-place of a woman of fashion than the rooms of a man.

Guy, however, remedied this in some measure, by hanging on the walls, here and there, a sabre and a Malay krist; several Oriental poniards, in their cases of purple velvet; two or three swords and Scottish claymores with silver handles. These at once gave a masculine character to this Hotel, the air of which was as heavy with *ylang-ylang* as if it had been the apartment of some pretty woman.

Guy lived a life which was certainly not of the strictest, and allowed Vaudrey, his old companion at the college of Grenoble, to pursue his own path and gain as much enjoyment as was possible from politics; "to taste, in short," as Lissac sarcastically remarked, "the sweets of power." To Guy, Paris simply meant its pleasures, its surprises and its scandals.

He had devoured two fortunes, had dabbled a little in journalism, had speculated at the Bourse, gambled and lost at the clubs. He knew everybody and was known by everyone. He was the favorite of the women and the terror of the men. He was of good family and widely connected, which made it possible for him to traverse the mud of Bohemia without its adhering to his boots. He, when in difficulties and debts, always found some forgotten uncle or complaisant

friend to pay his obligations and arrange all his difficulties at the most critical moment. He was, in short, a Parisian to the tips of his fingers, or rather, he was worse than that—he was a provincial impregnated with Parisian vices, as certain invalids are saturated with morphine. He judged men by their wit, actions by their results, women by the cut and fit of their gloves. He was a thorough skeptic, and prided himself on his indulgence. Still alert at forty, and even pretending that it was a man's best age—that of fortune and *bonnes fortunes*—he lived on from day to day, enjoying the fleeting hours as best he could, saying to himself that a day of snow and rain is really no longer than a day of sunshine, and that a bad night is quickly over.

Lissac, after leaving Vaudrey, spent a portion of the night at his club in the Place Vendôme. He played and won. Retiring to bed he went to sleep over a fashionable romance, and awoke late the next morning with a somewhat heavy head. There was a bank of snow against his window, and on the windows of the house opposite. All the roofs in the neighborhood were concealed under this white sheet, the sky was leaden, and occasional flakes continued to fall.

"What vile weather! There is one comfort, however," thought Lissac, "there will be no visitors to-day."

"I shall see no one," he said to his servant, "for in such weather as this nobody would come except to borrow money."

He had finished his breakfast, eating his egg from

the shell with a small Russian spoon of enameled silver, his tea still smoked by his side in a pot of hammered silver with Japanese designs, when, in spite of the orders he had given, his servant brought in a card written with pencil. It was not a card, however, but a leaf torn from a note book.

"It is not any one to borrow money, sir!"

Guy took the paper disdainfully, believing, in spite of this assurance, that he should find some questionable name, and holding his glass to his eye he with difficulty deciphered the words; then, after uttering an exclamation of astonishment, he said, as he rose:

"Show her in."

He tossed his napkin, heavy with Russian embroidery, upon a chair, and instinctively looked in the mirror, pulled down his vest, and adjusted the cravat which was loosely tied under the collar of his blue foulard morning shirt.

As he was looking down on his red slippers emerging from his loose blue flannel trousers, a woman half lifted the satin portière and stopped, partially enveloped in the folds of orange satin. With a brilliant smile, which showed her beautiful teeth, she said, in a clear voice:

"Good morning, Guy!"

Lissac advanced to meet her with both hands extended. She dropped the portière behind her, and after a brief hesitation, boldly placed her small, well-gloved hands in Guy's, and looked full in his eyes with a gay laugh. He seemed to be a little astonished, and

looked at her as one studies a face one has not seen for some time. The lady boldly turned her face to the light, as if inviting inspection.

"You did not expect me to-day?" she said.

"I must admit—"

"That you were not thinking of me; in fact, that you never think of me nowadays."

Guy was about to stoop and deposit a kiss on the tips of those slender fingers, but suddenly reflected that since they had last met, the parting which divided his brown locks had grown much wider, he therefore remained upright, and answered, with the fatuity of a handsome man:

"You are mistaken. I think of you very often."

She had with one sweeping glance taken in all the furniture of the room, the pictures in their frames, the engravings and embroideries, and then seated herself near the fire with her pretty feet crossed over each other.

"You are charmingly established. But your taste, my dear Guy, has always been quite perfect."

"I have less now than when you knew me, my dear Marianne," he said, uttering this commonplace in a soft tone befitting a madrigal.

Marianne laughed as she shrugged her shoulders.

"Do you think me much changed?" she said, abruptly.

"Yes—you have grown younger."

"I don't believe a word of it."

"On my honor. You look like a school-girl."

"Heavens and earth!" cried Marianne, with her little ringing langh.

He continued to look at her curiously as she sat by the chimney. The clear flickering firelight which quivered over the gilt frames of the pictures, brightened the somewhat pale face of the lady and imparted to her gray eyes, which were small but brilliant, a copper-colored tinge. She half turned her blonde head toward him; the retroussé nose was small and dainty with its mobile nostrils, the mouth charming with its expressive curves, which might on occasion mean encouragement or defiance.

She allowed her cloak, trimmed with rather shabby fur, to fall from her shoulders, her full bust with its close-fitting robe, and her white throat half hidden by masses of russet-colored hair, were thus exposed to his admiring gaze.

She slowly removed her gants de Suede, which she mechanically rolled up into a ball. There was about her a certain natural elegance, an exquisite grace, in spite of her well-worn garments, and Guy, thoroughly accustomed to grasp at a glance the status of people, instantly divined that this woman, whom four or five years before he had found so delightful and seen surrounded by every luxury, had now come to grief financially. Of all the women he had ever known, Marianne Kayser was the one he had most deeply loved—loved with a feverish passion regardless of all obstacles. This Marianne was not a *fille*. She was simply a woman who, too poor to be married, too proud to be

a courtesan, had boldly taken her destiny in her own hands, and scorning all control had made her own life.

She was an orphan, and was brought up by an uncle, Simon Kayser, a solemn artist, who was indifferent to everything but his art, the morality, the dignity and the superiority of his art, and who had selfishly encouraged in his niece by his own indifference the development of the worst qualities of her nature; by the side of this man, in the atmosphere of an old bachelor's disorganized home, Marianne had led the bitter life of a girl whose instincts and tastes are all luxurious, and yet who had daily poverty and deprivation with which to contend. She had grown up in the society of models and artists, in the smoke of their pipes and within hearing of their jests. When she was a little child she had been as amusing to the painter as a kitten would have been; he permitted her to play in his studio and roll on his cushions.

Books lay about the studio. She read them all eagerly and examined the sensual engravings with great curiosity. She became a woman at an early age, long before Kayser supposed that she could understand or judge.

This man, who was totally without talent, who painted pictures as if they had been signs, had no idea that he had at his side a young creature eagerly seeking to solve the mysteries of life, the meaning of visions that haunted her, of temptations which attacked her.

If Uncle Kayser could have condescended to descend to terrestrial matters, he could have seen in Marianne's eyes and in her gestures a nervous, feverish, restless impatience. But he did not care, this big, bluff man continued to talk in a pompous manner of artistic morality, of æsthetic dignity, of the necessity of elevating the standard of art, of having a mission, an aim and an ideal, and allowed this little creature, who bore his name, to wander about unguarded and uncared for.

Lonely and forgotten the young girl lived for days absorbed in a book, pale, and with parched lips, but with flaming eyes, her fingers buried in her hair or resting on the window-sill, while her fixed eyes followed some vision among the clouds.

The atélier looked out on a silent, deserted street. Only an occasional weary footfall echoed through it; to Marianne it was like a huge stone cage, against the walls of which she hopelessly beat her wings.

Ah! If she could but escape from the solemn egotism, from the theories of Simon Kayser, and live the life of those who are free, beloved and wealthy.

Marianne grew up with this dream.

She had eternally before her eyes as before her life, this gray wall which was the huge house opposite the painter's studio, where the blinds were never opened. She was weary of the narrow, deserted street when the neighbors had all gone to the country to avoid the heat, and in winter she grew desperate as she looked out on the weather-stained roofs, the patches of dirty

snow and the lights behind the curtains of the distant houses. She was lonely and miserable, and her life grew daily more and more intolerable. She grew up, body and soul thus imprisoned in this dwelling, which she never left except to go to the Louvre and walk through the galleries on the arm of her uncle, who invariably made a halt before the same pictures and said precisely the same things—condemned or praised, according as the pictures of these masters corresponded to his view or differed from it. He talked a great deal of his system, and pronounced the word system in the most grandiloquent manner. Marianne always knew just what he was going to say. "These Flemish artists! They are only fit to paint snuff-boxes. They have no imagination and no ideas. And Titian—do you see that Titian? Now, where is the *thought* in Titian and the *morality?* He is simply a dealer in flesh—a butcher—a painter of courtesans. Art should have a dignity, a virginal purity, an ideality above all else!"

Ah these high sounding words were very fine, but they had a false ring to them as they struck the ear of his niece. She always went away from the Museum as saddened and depressed as if she had been wandering through a cemetery, and she returned home with a headache and in a rage against Fate. She preferred this studio with its shabby furniture and moth-eaten tapestry. Here at least she was alone, face to face with herself, devoured by a maddening, cowardly fear, a fear of the Future. This young girl who knew everything,

the bloom of whose purity had been tarnished by the jests of the Kayser atélier, where, in spite of the would be saintly character of the æsthetic discussions, the meetings had only too often the effect of an orgie, was again alone to question herself as to what life had in store for her and what fate would finally be hers.

She had no dowry. Her father had not left her a sou. Kayser was not only poor, but he was in debt. She had no profession, she did not care to give lessons on the piano; those girls who wished to compete for the Montyon prize might attempt that, but she never would.

What would be the end of a life like hers? Marriage? No, for who would wish to make her his wife? Possibly one of the artists who lounged into Simon Kayser's studio in shabby boots, to air their theories and tell their poor jokes. To fall from one Bohemia to another, from poverty to destruction, was not a pleasing prospect. The very idea of becoming the wife of one of these men filled her with disgust. Through the open windows came the soft breezes of spring, and as she lay on the worn divan, the wind lightly lifted her hair from her heated brow. She dreamed, dreamed, dreamed! Her waking was a mad flight!

To that house in la Rue de Navarin there came one day a young artist whose passions were kindled by the strange light in those daring eyes. All was said in one look. The young girl fell, not through ignorance or curiosity, but from a spirit of bravado. Since she had neither father nor mother, as there was no one to care

for her, she would throw aside the yoke at once. She would live her own life.

She fled with this man.

He was a good looking fellow, proud of his conquest and eager to exhibit it. He introduced Marianne to a crowd of men and women, and would have made her a *fille*, if her quick intelligence, the strong will and equally strong disgust of this woman had not ruled this first lover.

Kayser felt only astonishment when he knew of the flight of his niece. "How happened it," he asked himself, that he had never suspected what was going on in the girl's head? "Confound these women, nobody can understand them, not even the mothers who bore them!"

A father would probably have seen no more; what then could be expected of an uncle! And he resumed his pipe and slept off his annoyance, for his companions had laughed at him.

"Besides," added the painter, "Marianne had only followed the natural law." Complete liberty for every one was Simon Kayser's pet theory. Marianne was of age, she had the right to dispose of her destiny, and he was not inclined to judge her with great severity. When she had sounded the depths of the abyss — and Kayser drew a long whiff of his pipe—she would come back. Uncle Kayser would always give her a place at what he was disposed to call his fireside. "The fireside of your pipe," Marianne had once called it.

Kayser speedily consoled himself for this adventure

by the Sanctity of Art. What did it matter to the world that a girl should turn out badly? Public morals were not endangered. If, however, he, Kayser, had shown an immoral picture to the public, it would have been quite a different thing. The dignity, the gravity and the purity of Art must be protected! But a woman, only a woman, pshaw!

And not once did any one hear him make a single inquiry about Marianne, or utter a surmise as to what had become of her.

In her life, which was not that of a courtesan, so much as that of a woman who was in rebellion, Marianne had met Guy de Lissac, and had loved him as much as she could love any one. Guy amused her. With him she talked freely and discussed her prospects. Why did they ever part? They adored each other. Guy was rich, or lived as if he were. Marianne was delightful, spirited and original, a woman of whom Guy had never before dreamed. In fact, with each day he became more and more heartily in love with her, and she told him truly and in all sincerity that she had never loved before.

Her first lover? She had by that time almost forgotten his name.

There was no reason why they should ever separate except that Guy was a little afraid of Marianne. He asked himself if some day he might not be so carried away by this woman that he should marry her. He knew her past perfectly well, but she enchanted him to that degree that he was oblivious to it.

Uncle Kayser, busy in the composition of an allegory, called The Modern Family, a picture—which was pure and mystical, social and regenerative—had entirely forgotten his niece, and yet Lissac was tempted to restore Marianne to her uncle's nominal protection. He suffered at the mere idea of giving up Marianne to any other person. His terror of marriage, however, was stronger than his jealousy, and one fine day Guy broke loose from his chains. He sent her word that he was ill, and remained at home.

One fine morning Marianne walked in. She said to him, passionately:

"I will never leave you again. I have come to watch over you!"

Guy knew now that he was lost. He had the rapid conviction, as violent as a sudden blow, that if he once allowed this woman to install herself within his doors that the liberty of his life was imperilled. He determined to risk his life against his liberty, and during a brief absence of the nurse stationed at his bedside he tossed some few articles into a trunk and threw himself into a fiâcre. Shivering with fever and his teeth chattering, he bade the coachman drive to the station, and then took the train for Italy.

Marianne had felt a sharp pain at this sudden departure. It was a hope that had vanished. She loved Guy very tenderly, and fancied that she could retain him, and now he had fled from her! Where had he gone? When a letter came at last she was for a moment tempted to follow him. But she quickly decided that

Guy, wishing to avoid her, had entrusted this letter to some friend to mail from some town where he himself was not. To play the rôle of a woman running over the world to reclaim her lover was too absurd, and not at all to her mind. No, she would stay where she was. And, with almost the despair of a newly-made widow, she took her way to la Rue de Naverin, and found Uncle Kayser as calm as usual, and the picture of the "*Famille Moderne*" almost finished.

"Yes, it is good," said Kayser, "and its morality is beyond all question. Art, my child, demands Morality before anything else. Now sit down and tell me what you have been about."

For five years Lissac and Marianne never met. Their passion had slowly cooled by the medium of letters until it had become friendship. Marianne had written, Guy had answered. All these reproaches had been conveyed by mail, and, in spite of this correspondence, neither had sought to see each other. The caprice was extinguished, and yet they had thought they loved each other.

And now, this bitter cold morning, Marianne suddenly made her appearance, and sat there warming her pretty little feet and showing him the tip of her sagacious little nose, slightly reddened by the cold.

Guy was certainly greatly surprised.

He contemplated with considerable curiosity this woman, whom he had really loved, for his passion, if brief, had been sincere. He looked to see if within the depths of those bright, sparkling eyes there lurked

any remnant of the flames of other days, and wondered if there were one spark left which might be blown into life again.

Once he would have risked his very life for this woman, and had been tempted to sacrifice his name for her. He had torn himself from her with infinite difficulty and intense pain, and had fled to Italy, to seek in solitude a remedy for his sufferings. Yes, Marianne had been the woman whom he had best loved, and this blasé Parisian endeavored to recall his former sensations as he looked at her.

Marianne evidently understood precisely what was going on in Guy's mind, for she smiled very strangely. Reclining in the low chair with her fair head resting on the lace upon the back, she looked at Lissac with fixed attention. He felt rather than saw that there was a tinge of malice in her expression. The mobile nostrils of her little nose quivered nervously, and gave the lie to the calm smile upon her lips. The pretty hands lying on the arms of the chair beat a little feverish march with the tips of her fingers, as if playing upon a piano.

Guy's heart swelled with something of the old ecstasy. He saw in the shadow of the chin the pretty throat on which he had so often pressed his lips in a long, thirsty kiss. All the old passion was born again. Whether it was a new caprice, or the nearly extinguished fire flaming up once more, he could not decide, but he felt that this woman moved him as none other had ever done.

A faint, familiar perfume exhaled from Marianne's garments, and caused Lissac's brain to reel.

He said not one word, however, but waited for her to speak. Disturbed by his persistent silence, she suddenly shook her head and rose to her feet.

"May one smoke here?" she asked, opening a cigar case of Russian leather, on which was her monogram.

"What a question!" Guy exclaimed, as he lighted the sponge wet with alcohol, that stood on a silver tripod, and presented it to Marianne.

She quickly rolled her cigarette and lighted it. The blue flames were reflected in her eyes and brought a faint color to her cheeks, which Guy watched with quickened pulse.

"That is a very odd invention," she said, as she returned him the sponge still blazing.

He extinguished it and, sinking into a deep chair, abandoned himself to all the charm of his old souvenirs as he watched Marianne, already enveloped in a cloud of smoke.

"You perhaps do not know," he said, "that more than once—yes, it is true, upon my honor—when I have turned a corner my old battered heart has throbbed on seeing some distant figure, the gleam of a russet-colored curl under a velvet toque or over a fur-lined cloak, or a pale profile of some fair blonde with a pearl-set close to her ear, for they brought you suddenly before me. These toques, covered with feathers, now so much worn, were your invention; you were the first to place them on your glorious

hair. Whenever I saw one of them I invariably followed it. The unknown would walk swiftly on with a little click of her high heels on the pavement, and I continued to follow her, cherishing the illusion that at the end she would take me to some place where I might pick up some crumb of my lost Paradise. Many such ghosts walk the streets of Paris, Marianne, and I am not the only one who has felt the anguish and the heartache that I have known. More than once I have felt that my eyes were wet, but if it was winter, I always concluded that it was the cold. What do you think, Marianne?"

Marianne laughed.

"You are romantic, my dear Guy," she said, as she looked him full in the face.

"No, only melancholy; nothing more."

"Ah! I had no idea that you suffered in that way. It is neuralgia. A little valerian and quinine in silver coated pills is a sovereign remedy."

"You are laughing at me."

"No," she replied; "but it was certainly very foolish—if the mere recollection of me could inspire such romantic thoughts, and could cause you to follow every toque with plumes that you chanced to see—it was very foolish in you, I repeat, to take the train to Milan and fly from me as from a creditor."

It was now Guy's turn to laugh.

"Ah! It was because— Well! the truth was that I loved you too much!"

"This is precisely what I expected you to say!"

cried Marianne, in an abrupt tone which was in singular contrast to her previous elegant repose.

"I was, perhaps, very stupid, but what could I do?" said Lissac.

"You need have no doubt on that point, my dear friend, it is always stupid in a man to voluntarily relinquish a woman whom he loves. Besides, it is a most unusual phenomenon."

"Do you remember the time, dear Marianne," said Guy, "the time when you sent one of your photographs to a person who loved you very dearly, and wrote upon it, "To him whom I love best in the world?"

"Oh! yes," she answered, as she watched a little cloud of smoke floating up to the ceiling. "Those things are not readily forgotten, particularly if they are written in all sincerity."

"And you were sincere?"

"I was, indeed," she replied, with a smile.

"And yet I have been told since, that you had adored some one else."

"That is quite possible," answered Marianne, with sudden bitterness, "but in the life I have led, I have been so often bought, that I have, perhaps, more than once been led into the error of mistaking for love, the pleasure it was in my power to give."

She uttered these words in a hissing tone that sounded like a lash cutting the air. The anger and suffering revealed moved Lissac very deeply.

This Parisian experienced a new sensation, and this

woman as she lay back in her chair and indolently looked up at the light rays of smoke floating above her head, seemed to him a new creature who had come there to tempt him. His eyes wandered from the crown of her head to the tips of her delicate feet, her figure was exquisite, he had almost forgotten its beauty, and the unexpected return of this vanished friend, assumed in his eyes the proportions of an adventure. And then, too, this under current of bitterness whetted his curiosity, and again awoke in him all that had been lying latent of a passion which had been abruptly cut in two, not extinguished.

He had drawn a low seat close to Marianne's side, and as he sought to meet her eyes his hand tenderly clasped her white hand. His touch was like an embrace.

Suddenly, Marianne turned her head, looked him full in the face, and said, in the laughing tone of a person who, from experience of the past, refuses to open an account in the future:

"It seems to me, my friend, that you are making love to me."

Lissac smiled.

"No, no," she cried, "that will never do. It is a romance that you have already read!"

"The romance of my life," answered Lissac in a low voice, with his lips close to her ear.

"All the more reason that you should not read it again! There are some books, you know, which can never be read but once. And that is, perhaps, the reason that one can never forget them."

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She arose from her chair and tossed the end of her cigarette in the fire, and turning toward Lissac looked straight into his astonished eyes.

"It is long ago, my friend, that you were in the habit of talking about 'Marianne's caprices.' You laughed at them in those days, indeed we laughed together. Do you know the point which I have reached, my dear Guy? I have become the victim of the most intense ennui. An ennui that is absolutely incurable. I yawn my life away—I yawn until my jaws are nearly broken. The days seem endless, people all seem stupid, books are dull, fools seem idiots, and clever men are simpletons in my eyes. It is a frightful disease, my friend, and most depressing in its effects on mind and body. I hate everything, and am dying of thirst for the impossible; and this, permit me to say, is a thirst that is unquenchable. The spring of fresh water which I long to taste, has never yet been created!"

She spoke in a hard, bitter tone, with smiles interrupted by little nervous laughs. She had taken another cigarette, and, from time to time, she removed it from her lips and sent the smoke up in little rings, or, with the end of her little finger, knocked away the ashes which fell in a tiny heap on the carpet.

Interested and puzzled, Guy forgetting the temptation by which he had just been assailed, now shook his head, like a physician who finds his patient much more ill than he supposed.

"You are very unhappy, Marianne!" he said.

"I? Nonsense! Weary, disgusted, bored I certainly

am, but not unhappy. Unhappiness has something grand about it. It is like thunder and to be respected. But rain, the everlasting, hopeless drizzle, with mist and mud, is more than one can endure. And it rains, it rains terribly in my life!"

She lifted her arms in an interminable yawn, which revealed to Lissac the intense disappointment and hopeless weariness of which she was the victim.

"Life! What is my life? A grindstone perpetually turning. A continual re-commencement of loves without joy, and of intoxication without thirst. Do you understand? Can you realize what the life of a *fille* must be when led by a true woman? A soul of my own, a mind of my own, in a body which no longer belongs to me, which I have yielded up, God forgive me! For one thing I am thankful: and that is that I love no one and wish never to love again. I wish to be my own mistress, and not the mistress of any one else. I have but one pleasure, and that—"

"Is what?" asked Guy, whose heart was filled with pity as he listened to this outburst.

"My one pleasure," said Marianne, "is to lock myself into a little room which I have hired in a quiet street near the *Jardin des Plantes*, where I have placed all that remains to me of my past life, books, portraits, and other trifles. My one joy is to say to myself, that there I am not known, that my name has never been heard within these walls, and whence I come, or where I go, what I think, whom I hate, or whom I have loved, is totally unknown to the dwellers under that roof. I

lock the door and throw myself on a lounge, and comfort myself with the idea that were I to die suddenly — an aneurism or congestion, you know, might carry me off as well as another — that no one would know who I am, and that the figure, whose serpentine lines are recalled to you by every feathered toque you see, will be carried off to the Morgue or to the grave, it matters little to me which. These days are not very gay, I admit, but my friend, they are my happiest hours. Judge then, what the others must be!"

Lissac was deeply moved, he was also greatly puzzled. She had come to him; she must therefore be in need of him. She had not come to take the mark from out the incompleted volume, that was clear. Why then had this charming, capricious creature, this woman who was so utterly miserable appeared before him. What did she want? Guy knew her well, and he felt that she would never have come merely to evoke old memories and to deliver captive into his hands the secret of her anguish.

She laughed again when she had finished her confidence in regard to her love of solitude, and looking at Guy, she said:

"I am told that you are very assiduous in your attendance at Sabine Marsy's receptions."

"Yes," answered Lissac, "although I am not fond of political salons."

"Are hers political? If the newspapers are to be believed they are becoming learned. I hear that Monsieur de Rosas—by the way, my dear Guy, do you ever

see Monsieur de Rosas?" As she uttered this name in a tone of great indifference, Marianne leaned a little forward to look at Guy.

He did not reply immediately; he was thinking why Marianne should speak to him of Rosas. He vaguely divined that this Castilian Hidalgo counted for something in Marianne's visit.

"I see him whenever he is in Paris," he finally answered.

"Then you will see him very soon, for he comes to-morrow."

"Who told you so?"

"The newspapers. Do you never read them? He returns from the East, and Madame Marsy relies on him to relate his adventures at a soiree which she gives for the purpose. Rosas must be greatly changed if he can make a success of this sort of thing. He was an absolute savage a while ago."

"No, he was only shy, which is a very different thing. But," asked Lissac, after a moment's pause, "what has Rosas — Tell me first if you are sure that he will be here to-morrow."

"I only know as do you what the newspapers say. Nowadays we receive news of our friends through the reporters. At all events you believe it, and as it is of the first importance that I should hear Monsieur de Rosas, I have come to ask you to present me to Madame Marsy."

"Ah! That is why—" Guy began.

"Yes, that is precisely why. I am bored to death,

I am crazy about the East. Do you remember the *Désert*, by Félicien David, which I used to play to you on the piano? I must hear what Rosas has to say about his journey. Perhaps he will make me forget Paris."

"The other evening, Marianne, Madame Marsy begged me to present Vaudrey to her. You now ask me to present you to Madame Marsy. I play two parts you see, but I am none the less charmed to introduce you to a salon which will I trust seem less dreary in your eyes than your little room near the *Jardin des Plantes*. But tell me, have I dreamed it, have you not been a friend of Sabine Marsy's?"

"I have occasionally met her and found her charming. She has asked me to go to her, but I have never dared. My love of solitude—"

"But that little room of yours," said Guy with a smile, "is it an impossibility to see it?"

"It is not an impossibility, but it would be a difficult thing to achieve. I never conceal anything from my friends, moreover," Marianne replied; "they may know all my secrets on one condition, which is that they shall remain my friends."

She uttered this last word with marked emphasis, and then added quickly:

"And only friends!"

"Friendship," said Guy, "is a very good thing, and a very sweet thing, but—"

"But?"

"Love is—"

"Don't speak to me of love. It flies away with a

whirr of its wings as swallows take flight. Possibly both go to Italy! No, friendship, if you please." And she extended her hand, which in spite of its size, was as strong as iron. "When you wish to call on me you will find me. I will give you my address. But it is not Guy for whom I shall look, it is Monsieur Lissac. Is that agreed?"

"It would be too impertinent were I to answer you with a simple *yes!*"

Marianne shrugged her shoulders.

"Romance again! How can you be so foolish. Keep all that sort of thing for some one else. Its effect on me was exhausted long ago!"

She raised her hands and placing them on the two cheeks of her companion, who grew suddenly pale, drew his face down to hers and kissed him frankly in a friendly sort of way.

"I did love you once," she said, "but that is all over. Do not complain and do not ask for anything more."

He felt a mad desire to snatch this woman in his arms and prevent her from ever leaving him again.

She had thrown her cloak over her shoulders, and as she opened the door she said, carelessly:

"It is all arranged then? I shall see you at Madame Marsy's?"

"At Madame Marsy's. I will request her to send you an invitation."

"And I will call here and take you up. You must not forget to present me to Rosas—we will see if he will recognize me."

She laughed merrily.

"And you must present me also to Monsieur Vaudrey, your friend."

Her pretty teeth glistened in an eerie sort of way as she laughed. "A Minister," she continued, "is not a bad person to know. The time may come when he may be very useful. *Addio, Caro!*"

Guy de Lissac took two steps forward, but Marianne had already disappeared. The Japanese portière fell in rich silken masses between him and her. He opened the door. Mademoiselle Kayser was in the ante-room with her hand on the door.

"I will be here at nine o'clock," she called to Lissac. She nodded farewell. The servant ran forward to open the door, and in a second she had disappeared.

Guy went back to his room almost in a rage.

Now, that she was gone, he threw open his window. It seemed to him that a faint blue mist—the smoke from Marianne's cigarette—was blown away by the fresh air and also the odor of new-mown hay—and with the smoke and the perfume departed the brief intoxication which had taken possession of him.

The cold air, the bright sunshine, poured in and took possession of his room. Without, the snow-covered roofs stood out against the clear sky, which was as blue as that of a day in June.

Guy drew in a long breath of this pure atmosphere. The wind also blew Marianne's kiss from his heated brow.

"I suppose I shall always be a child as long as I live,"

he murmured, half aloud. "It was not for me that she came, it was for Rosas. The friends of one's friends are our lovers! And, upon my word, I came very near being caught again. Imagine, at my age, if I had been compelled to take another journey to Italy!"

And laughing a little at this idea, he closed the window, for it was very cold.

CHAPTER V.

MADAME MARSY'S RECEPTION.

ON the sidewalk in the Boulevard Malesherbes two policemen, wrapped in overcoats, were keeping back the crowd that pressed around the widely opened doors of the house in which Madame Marsy resided. A double row of spectators stood on either side watching the carriages as they rolled up and deposited at the foot of the steps blazing with lights, women wrapped in cloaks — men wearing white gloves and with the fur collars of their overcoats turned up around their cheeks. The carriages afterwards drove across the court-yard in order not to interfere with those constantly coming up.

For an hour a double row of carriages had passed that door. Other guests came on foot and tossed away their cigars at the foot of the steps. The spectators pointed out to those nearest them many a well-known face. It was said in the crowd that most of the Ministers were there.

Madame Marsy's salon was brilliantly lighted. People hustled each other in the vestibule. Overcoats and cloaks were thrown aside and gloved hands were extended, as in the ante-room of a theatre, to receive a bit of pasteboard on which was inscribed a number.

"Yours is 113," said Monsieur de Lissac to Marianne, who, in a pale blue robe, was on his arm.

She smiled as she slipped the pasteboard into her pocket. "Oh! I am not superstitious!"

She was radiant. People moved aside to permit this pretty creature to pass; her warm, russet-colored hair fell on her white shoulders, and the satin of her blue gown lay without a wrinkle over her rounded hips.

Lissac, with his glass in his eye and his closed hat pressed to his side, entered the salon, feigning utter unconsciousness of the questioning, curious gaze of his acquaintances.

Madame Marsy stood near the door, charmingly dressed in a toilette of black which brought out her blonde beauty. By her side was Madame Gerson, slender and handsome, assisting her to receive the world that crowded in.

Sabine seemed delighted to welcome Marianne. She had long since recognized the cleverness of this audacious and original woman. In regard to Marianne's Past she never inquired. The niece of Kayser the artist, ought to be received everywhere, and Kayser himself was with Marianne. He came in directly behind her, but had not been noticed. He stood talking with a man of about sixty, whose beard was white, and who, with a gentle smile and evidently preoccupied thoughts, listened to what Kayser was saying.

"Ah! my dear old Ramel! How glad I am to see you!" cried the artist, in a theatrical sort of way.

"Where do you keep yourself, Kayser? We never meet nowadays."

"Because I am always at work. I never venture to be idle. The dignity of Art—"

Their voices were lost in the buzz of conversation in the first salon, already crowded. Sabine took Marianne by the hand and led her away from Lissac into a larger salon, furnished in red, where chairs were arranged in long rows before an empty space, which, thanks to the arrangement of curtains and drapery, looked like a stage on which some long looked for actor was about to appear.

Almost all of these chairs were occupied by pretty women, who turned to look at Marianne as she appeared in the doorway. Sabine showed her to a seat, which happened to be very near the place where it was evident Monsieur Rosas was to stand.

Madame Gerson took a chair next to Marianne, who scrutinized the face of this friend of the house in the hope of divining her thoughts. Madame Gerson was delighted that dear Sabine had such a success. Monsieur Vaudrey was there, and Madame Vaudrey also; and Monsieur Collard (of Nantes), the President of the Council, and Monsieur Pichereau, too—he had been Minister.

"It is almost the same as three Ministers, you see! Sabine is perfectly delighted, yes, quite intoxicated. Just think of it! Madame Hertzfield, Sabine's rival, never had but two Ministers at a time in her salon!"

She chattered on, with the inconsequence of a child,

insisting that Madame Hertzfield's salon was falling off. Only the Sub-Prefects went there now. Monsieur Vaudrey was perfectly charming. He talked delightfully at dinner, and asked to be helped the second time to the *timbale*.

Marianne listened, but her thoughts were far away. She asked herself how long she would be compelled to sit there before Monsieur de Rosas appeared.

Guy was right. It was Rosas, and only Rosas, whom Marianne had come to find in Sabine's salon. She was determined to see him again, to speak to him, and to tempt Fate once more. It was a sudden idea, a last caprice. And why not?

Marianne said to herself that she was playing for high stakes. She well remembered this José de Rosas, whom she had met several times long ago with Guy. He was more of a Russian than a Spaniard, and spoke with exquisite correctness both the classical language and the argot of the Asphalte and the Coulisses. He was a great amateur, a collector, and even sometimes wrote. He was liberal in his opinions, extravagant by nature, and passionately fond of travel. He was only thirty, but he had been everywhere, all over the world, to India and Japan. He had drank camels' milk in the tents of the Kirghiz, and eaten dates with the Kabyles. He told adventures with a certain laughing sarcasm which seemed utterly improbable, but for the truth of which he vouched. There seemed something of Byron's nature engrafted upon his own, but he had been cured of a good deal of his romance by many a hard knock.

She remembered one visit she had made, accompanied by Guy, upon José, in an apartment furnished by the Duc in la Rue de Laval. He occupied there a spacious suite of rooms, hung with Eastern tapestries and crowded with statuary, pictures, and all sorts of rare and costly things. José offered Marianne and Guy, coffee served à la Turque, and as they talked they smoked the light tobacco of the East, which the Spaniard, quoting from a Persian poet, gallantly compared to the perfumed locks of his fair guest.

Often since she had thought of this handsome fellow, of his blue eyes and tawny beard, as he lay on the Hindoo rug, and imitated the monotonous Arab chant, which is as slow as the progress of a Caravan.

"Is not my friend Rosas charming?" Guy had said.

"Charming!"

"And so witty, and so learned, and at the same time so amusing! His wealth is enormous, too, which takes nothing from his agreeability."

And Marianne enumerated to herself all that such a man could do and be—the power given by wealth, the satisfaction of his desires, the indulgence of every fancy! She recalled, through the mist of years, his somewhat haughty smile, his heavy mustache, and those sharp, white teeth. But where was the Duc now? With the Kabyles or the Mormons, at Tahiti or in Greenland? The newspapers had at one time announced his intention of organizing an expedition to the North Pole. Perhaps he had been lost among the glaciers. She sighed and then smiled at her own selfish regrets.

It seemed, too, that José had more than once been on the point of showing his admiration for her. He had been polite and respectful, as a man of the world is expected to be toward a woman who occupies certain relations to his friend; but under all this cautious reserve Marianne had detected a certain something which she pretended not to see. She loved Guy at that time, or she thought she loved him, which comes to much the same thing. She, therefore, smiled but coldly on the aspirations of Monsieur de Rosas.

"I was very stupid," she said to herself later, "and he was quite as dull as I. The duties of friendship! What nonsense! Guy's spectre need not have come between us!"

Over and over again this beautiful woman wondered what might have been, and was vexed at her own conduct. Some persons feel remorse for their misdeeds; she felt it for her honesty. She thought very often of the Duc de Rosas, and as longingly as Eve dreamed of her Paradise lost. She would have astonished, conquered and bewildered Paris had she been the friend of Rosas.

"And whose fault was it? How stupid it was not to dare!"

And now thus unexpectedly, Chance, at this critical moment of her life, brought back to Paris this Rosas whom she had never forgotten, and who possibly remembered her. She would soon find this out, however, and would make herself known to him at once. Marianne was by nature superstitious, and her confi-

dence in herself returned under this unexpected stroke of good luck.

What if the arm of a Duke should raise her from the abject level to which she had fallen!

Guy and Sabine appeared in her path as we have seen. She at once determined to make use of them both to aid her in her designs on Rosas.

She had often resolved to punish this Guy de Lissac for his insolent desertion, but this resolve did not prevent her from first making use of him. Then, too, vengeance is so fatiguing and so useless!

And now Kayser's neice, Guy's friend, the woman who had given herself away or been taken, it mattered little which, the girl whose expressive face was purity itself, now sat only two steps from him whom she so longed to see once more.

"If he ever fancied me for one moment," she said to herself, "Rosas shall love me now."

The room was intensely warm, but in spite of the heat Marianne determined to stay just where she was, in the front row of chairs, until the Duc appeared.

She felt the hot air on her forehead, and asked herself if she were not about to faint, unaccustomed as she was to these soirées. But she sat still looking earnestly at the door, in hopes that the traveller would appear, and that between those red curtains the Spaniard's full face would soon show itself.

A few steps from her sat a young woman who could not have been more than twenty-four or five. She looked very lovely in a white robe, with quantities of

natural roses in the corsage and in her blonde hair. She was as surrounded as if she had been a queen, and looked a little confused at the honors and attentions she received. In her astonished eyes and flushed cheeks, there was something that indicated the provincial, although she was very charming.

Marianne heard the women about her talking of this lady.

"She is the wife of the new Minister."

"Madame Vaudrey, you mean?"

"Yes; pretty, is she not?"

"Wonderfully so. Fresh and charming."

And then the voices dropped.

"Too fresh, by far."

"A little provincial."

A man's voice murmured:

"My dear fellow, she is lovely, a thorough lady in appearance; nothing of the *cocotte* about her!"

Low as these last words were whispered, Marianne heard.

Every eye was fixed on this woman, who borrowed some reflection from the rising sun, and who bore the name of the new Minister. She had made her début with him, and accepted with gentle acquiescence the burthen of his glory. The timidity of her undecided, almost uneasy smile seemed to ask pardon of the other women for her success.

Near the window, among a group of gentlemen, sat a young, happy-looking man who looked, from time to time, at the lady, whom we have described, as if to see if she were enjoying herself.

"Where is Monsieur Vaudrey," asked Marianne of Madame Gerson.

"That is he opposite, a little to your right, next Monsieur Collard. He is devouring you with his eyes."

"Nonsense!" said Marianne, with her cold smile.

And she looked at Vaudrey. She had, in fact, already noticed this elegant looking man, who had been watching her for some time with persistent earnestness. But why should she have supposed that this was Monsieur Vaudrey? He was very charming at all events, and looked, moreover, extremely wide awake. She had heard him make a complimentary remark, too, when she passed guided by Sabine.

And this was Vaudrey?

She had often heard him spoken of. She had read his discourses, and had continually seen his photographs in the stationers' windows. The determined expression of the face had always pleased her, and she felt that she might have recognized him from his photographs.

Of all the faces which turned inquiring eyes upon him, that of Marianne more particularly attracted Sulpice. He had submitted a few moments before to the singular charm of this feminine apparition, making her way through the hedge of men, who whispered their comments as they passed.

Marianne looked at him, and met his gaze and his half troubled smile.

Her pale cheeks flushed, when a great stir was heard

and Monsieur de Rosas appeared with Madame Marsy, who led him upon the narrow stage as if to introduce him to his audience.

"Ah! He has come!"

"And that is the Duc de Rosas?"

"Yes; that is he!"

"He is charming."

This name of Rosas whispered about among these women, sounded in Marianne's ears like a bugle call. It seemed to her that a decisive hour in her life was thus heralded in a fantastic fashion. She felt all the superstition of a gambler at this moment. She said to herself, that if José recognized her instantly she should feel that there was hope for her plans.

"Men forget less easily than women," she thought. "Either from regret or selfishness, some among them linger over their souvenirs like Guy, and find their lost youth again in our faces. Others regret, possibly, a lost opportunity, and the Duc is quite sentimental enough for that!"

She determined that Rosas should look at her. Yes, cost what it might, he should see her at once. Leaning forward with her chin supported on her right hand and with the other fanning herself with all the grace of a Spainard, she gazed at the Duc with all her soul in her eyes. There is such a magnetism in the human eye, that he, after a bow as profound as it was elegant, on raising his head to look at the parterre of pretty women gathered together by Sabine, was irresistibly attracted to the spot where Marianne sat. He saw her! And afterward had eyes for no one else.

Rosas stood in the red frame of the curtains. His pale face, regular features, and pointed beard suggested a Castilian portrait of the time of Philippe II. A touch of scarlet, a rosette on his breast, was the only bit of color about him. Conventional as was the costume of this sad-eyed man, with a far away look in his eyes, his black coat assumed the aspect of a *pourpoint* of other days, and the order of the Légion d'Honneur on his breast suggested a minute Calatrava cross on the velvet of a mantle.

When he caught sight of Marianne and met her ardent eyes, this melancholy Spanish face broke into a radiant smile, which vanished as he bowed low and respectfully. It was enough. Marrianne was fully satisfied.

"He recognized me! I am not forgotten!" she said to herself. And her pale face flushed with triumph as she threw back her head, and leaning back in her chair, listened with close attention and earnest eyes. She drank in each word that fell from his lips. Her nostrils were dilated as if some rich eastern perfume were in the air. The Duc began to speak in a low, sweet voice, which grew louder and more animated as he went on.

Every one was interested and every one listened with attention. Not a sound was heard in the salon except the flutter of fans, like the rustle of wings. Rosas did not assume the manner of a lecturer. He simply talked to this room full of people as he would have done to Marianne alone, and gave, in that voice

which was more Italian than Spanish, in its musical and not guttural tones, an account of the shores of the Nile, the slow monotony of the Caravans, the beauty of the starry nights. He described the song of the camel drivers, as slow and almost as solemn as prayers, and the poetry of the ruins sleeping among the red sands of the Desert. He quoted from one of these Arab songs, lines as exquisite as a sonnet, where the Eternal words of Love, sweet and moving in all tongues, acquired a character of intense passion—songs in which lovers who have been dust for centuries embalmed their joys and their sorrows. Songs in which they lavish praises on the hair and eyes of the beloved, in which they implore tokens of affection from women who have long since become ghosts and phantoms—songs in which they promise roses that can never wither and flowers that will never fade. An exquisite, delicate charm pervaded these translations made by this Castilian, translations in which he carefully preserved their especial character. The key note of these songs was love, not the joys of love, but its disappointments and regrets.

The Duc seemed to take more pleasure in repeating these poems than in narrating his adventures, or in giving his impressions of his travels. His own personality disappeared in the presence of this passionate inheritance bequeathed by one humanity to another. Marianne trembled, her whole nature vibrated under these words, in which she divined a wish on the part of Rosas to speak to her and to her alone.

She well remembered the day, and she was certain that it was also in his mind, when José in her presence and that of Lissac, had once before described to her these Arab songs.

She forgot the years that had elapsed since then. She found herself once more in the old studio in la Rue de Saval. Sabine Marsy's salon disappeared. Rosas was whispering these words in her ear, and allowing her to divine his passion in spite of the loyalty due to Guy.

And what of Guy? Marianne no longer cared for him. The Duc alone existed for her now. Guy's influence was but a brief episode in her life. And she looked fixedly at Rosas.

Sulpice, whom she did not see or heed, never took his eyes from Mademoiselle Kayser. He thought her charming. The magnetism which she exhaled powerfully affected this man who did not hear one word uttered by Rosas, and thought only of this beautiful woman, between whom and his wife he could not avoid instituting a comparison, as the two sat almost side by side.

Adrienne was very pretty, more regularly pretty with her light brown hair closely and accurately, than this woman with her russet locks so carelessly arranged. It was very strange but true that his wife now struck him as cold and colorless. He felt a momentary annoyance, moreover, at her evident timidity and at her perpetual smile and stiff manner of sitting.

Sulpice looked from his wife to Marianne and admired the easy grace of the latter: the serpentine line of her beautiful form, the very pallor of her complexion pleased him. She was a veritable Parisian, with all the charm of her race, and with her full share of those intoxicating qualities which are read in the eyes of even some of the most honest of women.

In the course of his remarks Rosas described a certain mysterious powder used by the Indians. These words happened to strike the ear of Vaudrey, who at once said to himself that the most subtle and most deadly poison he knew was the glances of a woman, and he was mad with desire for this poison.

He was impatient for the Duc to conclude. What did he care for his travels, for these Arab translations, this Eastern poetry and all these descriptions. He preferred to know what a pretty creature like Marianne might think of them. How beautiful she was! He had heard her name and remembered it. It so happened that he knew her uncle,—the painter had once sent him a pamphlet entitled "An Essay on the Means of Elevating the Morality of Art." The Minister felt as Rosas talked, much the same as when some member made too long a speech in the Chamber, and kept him from his dinner.

He could not refrain from saying in a whisper to the President of the Council, who sat next him:

"If we could request him to conclude!"

Monsieur Collard smiled in a diplomatic manner indicative of his disapproval of his colleague's levity.

The Duc did not, however, bore any one but Sulpice. Everybody was delighted, and rapt. Marianne decided that she had been right in thinking him charming. He was delicate, refined and very simple, in spite of his smiling hauteur. When he finished he was loudly applauded. The applause spread into the next room. Silence had been maintained in order that the Duc's voice should also be heard there.

Rosas raised his gloved hand and seemed to say that he did not merit this applause; he received the bravos as a man of the world receives a bow; not as a tenor accepts an ovation. He tried to make his way through a group of men behind him.

"At last!" said Vaudrey, half aloud.

This was the moment for which he had waited. Now he could speak to Mademoiselle Kayser.

He hurried forward to offer his arm to Marianne. Madame Marsy had already captured Rosas and carried him away, escorted by a crowd who continued to offer their congratulations. But for that, Marianne would have at once gone to him, as she intended. But Vaudrey's arm was not to be disdained. The new Minister was the important personage of the evening. She looked Sulpice full in the face as if to ask the reason for the laziness which was apparent in his gestures, and when she saw that her fixed gaze made him a little uncomfortable, she gave him a lovely smile.

She moved through the salon between a double row of bows and smiles. She felt very strangely for a moment. It seemed to her that it was she who elicited

all this homage for which she felt herself to have been created; and that this was the reason why Sulpice had noticed her and selected her from among all the women present.

After all, it did not matter! She would soon find Rosas again, and perhaps it were better on the whole, that the Duc should come in search of her, and, in the meantime, she was moving through the rooms on the arm of the Minister. It was a great triumph of another kind.

Vaudrey, courteous and amiable, received all this attention as merely homage paid to his position, and addressed only a few commonplace words to Marianne, looking forward later to a more intimate conversation.

Before the buffet, sparkling with lights and crystal, bright with golden champagne frothing in the glasses, and with deep colored punch and colored ices, Vaudrey stopped, dropped Marianne's arm, but stood at her side while she ate the ice handed her by a lacquey.

A circle soon gathered around him. Eager faces examined his and tried to meet his eyes. But the Minister paid little heed to any one but Marianne, and was as eager to serve her as if he had been the recognized admirer of this beautiful woman.

Playing with her gold spoon and just tasting the ice she held, Marianne studied with the interest of a woman who scents an impending declaration, this statesman, who was as agreeable as if he were a mere man of society. A jeweller, weighing unfamiliar gold

pieces, is not more careful than a woman who calculates and judges the worth of a stranger who has just been presented to her.

Marianne at once saw that she had absolutely carried Vaudrey off his feet. It was evident that, charming and attractive as his wife was, he was quite ready to admit that other women were pretty, and to tell them so. He said this in his smile, in his eyes, and in the very attitude with which he leaned over this fair, pale creature.

In the crowd around the buffet, and in the presence of the persons who gathered about him, it was not easy for him to say much. But Marianne and Vaudrey, in order to talk at all, were forced to stand very near each other, and Sulpice perceived the perfume of new mown hay which lingered in all this woman's laces and ribbons, and even felt her warm breath on his cheek. His eyes told her his admiration as he looked down upon her graceful form. Her white shoulders and white arms emerged from the satin folds of her dress with the soft flush of snow on which the setting sun throws its rays. Her eyes were small but feverishly bright and sparkling, and her delicate ears were flushed. The candle light imparted to the hair of this woman a Titian-like red, almost as if she had dyed it with Henna. She looked up in his face with a smile of conscious power.

Vaudrey was half attracted and half provoked by this woman. He thought her beautiful with this double charm of Parisian grace and an exquisite toilette.

On her corsage, just over her heart, Sabine wore a black butterfly with outspread wings of shining gold, and Vaudrey with a smile, scarce knowing what he said, asked if it were her coat of arms.

She laughed.

"Precisely," she answered, "and indicates the state of my heart and my mind. Black butterflies or blue devils, whichever you please!"

"You are no exception, then to the common rule," said Sulpice. "All women are the same."

"Do you mean that all women are a little—how shall I say it? A little mad, perhaps?"

The Minister smiled and looked at Marianne, whose eyes glittered like those of a cat under her long lashes.

"No," he said, "I don't think all women are a little mad, but I do reproach them a little for liking blue only in the blue devils of which you speak. They generally avoid it, as if it were something to be disliked."

She pointed to the blue dress she wore and said, gayly:

"But, Monsieur Le Ministre, all women do not dislike blue, as you attest."

"Not if it is the fashion, and if it suits their beauty as admirably as this suits yours they would certainly adore it."

"I insist that they do like it, that they revel in it, but there are women and women, as well as men and men!" she added with a bright, audacious smile.

She dropped her spoon into her saucer, and held it

out to a servant. Her round, firm arm accidentally—or was it premeditated?—touched the cheek and almost the lips of Sulpice, who felt dizzy, with a schoolboy longing to press his lips upon all this whiteness as it flashed past. He closed his eyes, and when he opened them a second later he was himself once more. Marianne was fanning herself quietly, and he said to her, as if the thought had that moment occurred to him:

"It seems to me, Mademoiselle, that I have seen your portrait at the Salon in this same charming costume."

"Yes," she said; "and it is, I believe, the best picture my uncle has ever painted."

"I thought it excellent before I saw you," said Sulpice, "but now—"

She was not satisfied with the smile that seemed to end his sentence; she wished to hear the entire compliment.

"And now?" she asked, with a sweet smile.

"Now, I find it very inferior to the reality."

"That is always said, Monsieur Le Ministre, except by the artist himself, perhaps. But I am afraid that you see me through this famous blue—the sky blue of which you are so fond."

"And of which I am fonder than ever to-night," he said, with evident emotion.

She did not reply, but her eyes told him that she understood. He was very pale.

"You would be willing to be one of the stars of my salon as you are one of Madame Marsy's to-night?" he said, in a low voice.

"With the greatest pleasure, sir," she answered.

These words had not been heard by any one save themselves, but Marianne felt that every woman in the room was curious and jealous, and she threw back her head in triumph. In this room, heavy with the incense of homage, she had a vivid conception of Vaudrey's power, and envied him. In her absorption she almost forgot that she had come there for Rosas.

Vaudrey was about to speak when Madame Marsy, who was ubiquitous that evening in her desire to make herself agreeable to her friends, caught sight of Marianne, and coming to her took her by the hand.

"I beg ten thousand pardons, Monsieur Le Ministre," she said, "but I must carry her away. I have been asked over and over again where she is."

"By whom?" asked Vaudrey.

"By Monsieur de Rosas."

Vaudrey looked at Marianne and distinctly perceived a flash of joy pass over her pale face. He felt a singular pang, almost like physical suffering. "And why should I care?" he asked himself.

Marianne bowed her farewell to him with a smile. He bowed in return and watched her vanish in the crowd, carried away by Sabine, with a sort of angry regret, as if he had still much to say to this woman, who was almost a stranger to him. And then, in a moment, he was surrounded by his colleagues, by persons who wished to be presented to him, and who had only waited until the end of his conversation with Mademoiselle Kayser, an end which they would gladly

have hastened but for the fear of incurring his displeasure. Vaudrey felt himself quite lost in the crowd, and looked about for a friend.

He caught sight of a man older than himself, with a long, white beard. In his delight he called out:

"Ramel, is that you?"

And with a hearty gesture he extended both hands to this person, who was a man of sixty. A voluminous white cravat of a fashion long gone by, and a black vest cut close to the throat, offered a strange contrast to the white shirt fronts of the young men who were crowding about the Minister.

"I am, indeed, glad to see you, Ramel!" said Vaudrey.

"Many thanks, my dear fellow!" answered Ramel, whose somewhat severe face suddenly softened. "I came here to-night only to meet you!"

"Is that really so?"

"Indeed, it is. I wanted to take you by the hand. I wanted to congratulate you, heartily. It is a very long time since I saw you. How many things have happened since then!"

"Ah! Ramel, who the deuce would have thought I should ever be Minister in those days, when I took you my first articles for the *Nation Francaise?*"

"Pshaw! Any one can be a Minister," answered Ramel. "You are one, now; and I venture to recall to your memory Napoleon's words to Bourrienne, when he entered the Tuileries, "We are here, Bourrienne! Now we must stay!"

"That is precisely what Granet said to me when he announced the new combination."

"Granet meant more by his words, probably, than does your old Ramel."

"Who is the best friend I ever had in my life!" said Sulpice, with much feeling, as he took this man's hands in his with a warm, firm pressure.

"There is all the more merit in your telling me that," said Ramel, "as at present you have no lack of friends."

"Still a pessimist, Ramel."

"I? No, indeed. I am an optimist. I believe in everything and everybody. Consequently, I believe, too, in the platitudes of my compatriots, and in this I am never in error."

"What a savage you are! How did you ever come here to-night?"

"Because, as I told you before, I knew you were coming, and I wished to see you, and also because Monsieur de Rosas was to speak of savages, which would amuse me, I was sure. Had I been rich, or had I had even enough to live upon, I should have been a great traveller, and yet I have been forced to spend my days between Batignolles and Montmartre. It is like a tortoise wishing to be a swallow!"

"Ramel," said the Minister, "how would you like me to give you a commission to go and study where you will?".

"With my rheumatism! Thanks, your Excellency," answered Ramel, with a smile. "No, I am too old

now. I never asked anything in my life of any one, and I do not care to begin at this late date."

"You have not asked, I have offered."

"Well! my appetite has gone. I want rest. I have reached a point where the *far niente* seems better to me than anything else—I shall lie quiet until the last trump sounds. It is not so bad, after all."

"The fact is," said the Minister, "that if all the people whom you have obliged in your life had asked an invitation here to-night, these rooms would not have been large enough to contain them."

"Pshaw! they have forgotten the fact, as I have done myself," answered Ramel, shaking his head and smiling.

Vaudrey was as heartily glad to find this man whom he had known in Paris, and with whom he had regularly corresponded when living in Grenoble, as if he had been a relative. There was, indeed, a certain relationship of tastes and opinions, a relationship of the soul which united this veteran of the Press and this young statesman. Alike in many things, they were different in temperament, and Ramel, had he ever known them, had long since outlived the thirst for battle which warmed Vaudrey's blood.

"My pulse beats regularly," Ramel said. "Experience is better than quinine, after all!"

This Ramel was a sage. He took life as it is, without enthusiasm but without bitterness. He was not rich and was past sixty. He found himself, after a life of constant toil, as poor as when he began. He

had worked faithfully as a journalist of the good old time. He had done his duty, as he saw it, conscientiously and loyally. His profession was agreeable to him; he had read a great deal, written a great deal. And after all this had reached the end of his road almost without money, after seeing many an opportunity of making his fortune—in ways, to be sure, with which he did not care to soil his fingers. Weary, and almost forgotten, unknown or misunderstood by the rising generation, who called him "old," he watched the development of events and the rising of new stars. Ramel had, in his existence, assisted in the formation of Syndicates and of many financial enterprises. He had pushed on many an enterprise which seemed to him good; he had created millionaires without asking a centime, and had made Ministers without accepting the end of a ribbon.

It pleased him to act this métier, to create men after this fashion. All these actors in the great human comedy had come to him to ask his aid. That statesman who harangued so vehemently he had brought out and had criticised his first attempts. He had encouraged that member of the Institute to contend for the *Prix de Rome;* he had seen that musician, now a millionaire, come into his office and timidly offer him tickets for his early concerts. He had been the first to praise the verses of the now celebrated poet, and also the first to praise the fashionable actor, and the tenor who had built a villa at Nice. Yes, of all these Ramel had been the first to say, "those are the elect!"

And yet Louis Ramel, when he was asked why at his age and with his talent, he was neither Deputy, Millionaire, nor Member of the Institute, nor anything else, he would reply with a smile and in the tone of a man who has sounded the depths of all things:

"Pshaw! What is the good of that! I have made Ministers, Academicians, Millionaires and Prefects by the dozen. I know what they all are. In fact most of the great men we see about us, I have myself manufactured!"

And philosophically permitting the crowd to pass, preferring to be their judge rather than their leader, he shut himself into his room with his books, his pictures and engravings which he had slowly gathered about him, piece by piece, year by year, lighted his pipe and lived over again his past. When he met some important personage who avoided seeing him or bowing to him, he said to himself: "You were not so proud when you came to ask me to sign a 'pay in advance' for the cashier of our Journal." Ramel had always liked Sulpice Vaudrey, who struck him as less ungrateful than others. Vaudrey was now Minister and remembered with emotion his hours of struggle. He remembered too, all that Ramel had done for him, and determined if possible to draw that man from out the shade in which he lived, and to place him in the front rank.

It was a great pleasure now to Vaudrey to find his friend and some one whom he could trust, and to whom he could speak freely.

"Will you accept the position of Secretary to myself?"

"No, Monsieur Le Ministre," answered Ramel, with his kind smile.

"Not to oblige me? not to help me?"

"No—no—I am selfish, my dear Vaudrey, and I am afraid it would make me too jealous! Take Navarrot," he added, pointing to an elegant man, most carefully dressed, who had saluted Vaudrey, and had called him "My dear Minister," at least a dozen times in one single sentence.

"Navarrot?"

"He seems to be attached to you."

"You are malicious, Ramel. He is attached to the office and not to the man. He is not the friend of a Minister but of the Ministers! He applauds every word they say."

"Oh! I know them," answered the old journalist. "When a Minister is on the top round of the ladder, they applaud him; when he has fallen they hiss."

Vaudrey laughed.

"But at least," he said, extending his hand, "you will come to see me?"

"Most certainly."

"And you still live in the same place, yourself?"

"Rue Boursault, Boulevard des Batignolles."

"Good-bye then, for the present. You will promise to aid me with your advice if I come to you?"

"I will aid you in every way that lies in my power, but I will accept no position, no position whatever," answered Ramel.

Vaudrey had enjoyed meeting his old friend, but he at the same time felt a strong desire to find in this crowd the pretty woman who had seemed to him a statue of Desire.

It had been by the merest chance that he had come to Sabine Marsy's that night, he had simply made his appearance to air his new dignity and become accustomed to it, but now he felt glad he had come. He had intended merely to appear and disappear and then return home with Adrienne to enjoy one of those tête-à-têtes which were so precious to him, and had of late become so rare.

He did not like these réunions, which fatigued him far more than did any of his official duties. He could not endure these receptions, when rooms that could not hold more than sixty persons comfortably, were compelled to accommodate six hundred—receptions where one is elbowed and cannot breathe, where the getting into the door amounts to a boxing match — and to obtain an ice is impossible, or if done it is with peril to one's life. He had a horror of those salons where people do not converse, where they chatter instead, where one can hardly exchange a word, much less an idea. It was wonderful that he had been able to speak to Mademoiselle Kayser and to Ramel.

He detested those solemn, pretentious young men, who in the various stages of their political careers were continually on the *qui vive* for advantageous introductions. These men seemed to have been born in their white ties, they were democrats in salons, but they had

never shaken a working man's hand in the street, and now buzzed around him with smiles on their lips and petitions in their pockets. How much he would have preferred the calm pleasure of a book and a comfortable chair in front of the fire, a talk with a friend, one of Beethoven's sonatas or a morceau by Mendelssohn, played by Adrienne.

It was this domestic life which he enjoyed, and for which he felt himself to have been made; and yet this salon, in which he had not intended to remain ten minutes, seemed perfectly delightful to him. One single person, of all this crowd, had made the evening seem delightful. He was in haste to find Marianne, and to see her once more, she interested him like an enigma.

Was she a virtuous woman, or did she belong to the *demi monde?* Who and what was she? At all events she was a woman, ten times a woman. Woman from her head to her feet, a pure Parisian—a problem of fair humanity.

Vaudrey made his way quickly through the salons, looking for Marianne. He saw, as he passed, Guy de Lissac lounging in a pomegranate colored satin chair, with his right arm on the gilt back and talking with Adrienne, who was fanning herself slowly. When she saw Sulpice his wife smiled, the happy smile of a loving woman, and questioned him with her eyes, anxious to know his wishes.

"Shall we go?" her eyes said.

He passed her, and returned her smile without

seeming, however, to understand her meaning, and disappeared into another salon, while Lissac said to Adrienne:

"You like your new quarters, I trust?"

"Do not speak of it! In those rooms I feel as if I were a stranger. Shall I tell you my impressions? It seems to me as if I were on a journey, and had stopped at a hôtel for a night or two. In my opinion, Ministers should never be married. Men have all the honors, and their wives all the ennui."

"But behind all this ennui there must be some joy, and when the time comes to leave, it will be with regret."

"I think not!" answered Adrienne, "I do not believe that I shall regret anything."

She, too, wished, as Vaudrey had done, that she could find her husband and leave this reception, but she said to herself that he probably thought it necessary, for some reason, to stay a little longer, as he evinced no intention of going.

The salon, which Sulpice entered, led into a smaller one, circular and hung with Japanese silk. A lustre of Venetian glass dimly lighted the divans, where people sat and talked. Sulpice knew instinctively that Marianne was there. He went directly in, and as he passed under the portière of delicate blue, he saw just before him the woman of whom he was in search, and also the Duc de Rosas, to whose words she had listened with such avidity and impassioned attention—he remembered her attitude.

The light fell full on Marianne's pearly shoulders, and brought out the peculiar shade of her blonde hair.

The Duc was looking down upon her.

Vaudrey stood motionless.

He felt that this tête-a-tête displeased him.

She turned her head, and caught sight of the Minister.

She half rose, and smilingly beckoned him to approach.

The hangings of blue satin seemed a fit setting for this pretty blonde.

"Monsieur Le Ministre," she said, "permit me to present my friend, the Duc de Rosas, who, being an orator himself, adores eloquence and admires you."

The Duc rose and bowed low before the Minister, but in this bow there was nothing obsequious; it was a bow of a great lord greeting a man of talent.

Vaudrey tried to find something to say to this man, but no words would come. He had just before applauded the Duc's discourse, but it seemed to him that Rosas was now a different person, that he was, in fact, an intruder who was very much in his way. He did not show his ill temper, however, and was presently able to utter some commonplace compliment.

With another bow he was about to turn away, when Marianne retained him with a gesture.

"You see, Monsieur Le Ministre," she said, with one of her charming smiles, as she pointed to the pale blue hangings of this salon, "you see there are women who like blue."

"I see, Madame," answered Vaudrey in a sarcastic

tone, which he knew to be misplaced, but which it was impossible for him to restrain.

"I like it also," continued Marianne. "We two had not talked together five minutes before I discovered that we had many tastes in common. I am extremely flattered."

"And I, Madame, am extremely happy," answered Vaudrey, disturbed by the glances which this woman threw at him.

She had resumed her place upon the divan, and Vaudrey, who had pardoned her tête-a-tête with Rosas, (and in reality what had he to pardon), saluted her again, and turned away carying with him the memory of this last smile and glance.

He resumed his rôle of Minister, bowing courteously to the right and the left, but all the time he was repeating to himself Marianne's words, "We have many tastes in common!"

He perceived Adrienne sitting in the same place, her tender smile seemed to him very lukewarm.

She rose, and offering her his arm he led her away, saying to Lissac as he did so:

"We shall see you soon, I trust."

When they entered the ante-room, a lacquey rushed forward with Madame Vaudrey's cloak, and another shouted with stentorian lungs:

"The Minister's carriage."

"I am very tired," said Adrienne, as they drove away. "And you?"

"I? Oh! I am not tired. I found it very interesting. Then, too, it is best to show one's self occasionally."

"Yes. I agree with you," answered his wife.

She laid her pretty hooded head on Vaudrey's shoulder with the gesture of a sleepy child. Her slender fingers were folded closely around her husband's hand. And while he listened to her gentle breathing, his thoughts wandered to that pretty blonde with the strange eyes, who had such an odd trick of passing the tip of her tongue over her lips, and who smiled into his eyes in such a bewildering fashion.

MERCANTILE
LIBRARY.
N.Y.

CHAPTER VI.

QUESTIONS AND CROSS QUESTIONS.

IN the small Japanese salon, hung with squares of light blue satin framed in bamboo, Marianne was sitting on the divan, half turned to the Duc, who thought the whole room—as Vaudrey had done—a fit setting for her beauty. Her manner with Rosas was much less reserved than with Vaudrey, and her eyes told José a tale that caused his cheek to pale, and his breath to come more and more quickly.

He had never forgotten her, her memory had been with him in all his travels. He looked at her as a man looks at a woman from whom some terrible necessity has parted him, and whom a sudden and unexpected chance once more brings within his reach.

She was lovelier than ever, more elegant, and more seductive, more finished, so to speak. Sabine had brought these two persons together in the most natural and easy manner, and then had left them in this salon, where the jealous instinct of Vaudrey had sought them out.

Yes, she had done well to stake her last chances on this game. It seemed to her that the years that had passed since she had last seen Rosas, had been wiped away, and that she was no older than when she parted

from him. She knew that she had rightly divined his passion in those days in spite of his cold reserve.

She was intensely gratified. She remembered the long morning with José in his rooms, and this Japanese salon added to the illusion.

"Do you know," she said, "that I feel as if I had been dreaming, and that I have not grown any older since I saw you?"

"Not in appearance, at all events," answered Rosas. "In fact—"

"Oh! I know what you are about to say; I have heard it before. Lissac paid me the same compliment the other morning."

She bit her lips, vexed at her own imprudence, but had she intentionally uttered Guy's name she could not have been better pleased with the result. Monsieur de Rosas, always very pale, became ghastly.

"Ah!" he said, "you still see Guy then?"

"I! I had not spoken to him for five years, when I asked him to obtain an invitation for me for this evening, and that, merely because I knew you were to be here."

"Ah!" said José, and not another word.

But Marianne was satisfied. She knew now that the Duc loved her still, for had he not started at Guy's name. She was right—she had read Rosas well.

"And what has become of you in all this time?" she asked. She looked at him as only a half hour before she had looked at Vaudrey.

"I have lived, that is all," he replied.

"And I am willing to wager," Marianne said boldly, "that in all that time you have never once thought of me."

"Of you?"

"Yes; of that foolish Marianne — who is more foolish, probably, than any other woman you ever saw, though you have wandered the world over—but who has a heart that is not altogether bad, a heart that has beat to suffocation at memories of certain things which you have probably forgotten."

"I remember everything!" said the Duc, in his rich voice.

Marianne laughed.

"In what a tone you said that! Do you remember how I formerly called you Don Carlos? But you make me think more of Philippe II. 'I remember everything!' Such a funereal, tragic tone! And yet, our souvenirs are not very dramatic."

"That depends on the good they have done, or the evil they have caused!" answered Rosas, very gravely.

"Ah! God forgive me if I have ever wished you the smallest evil, dear Rosas! Give me your hand and look me straight in the eyes. I have always liked you. Do you not believe me?"

The Duc tried to read the truth in Marianne's eyes, but from them escaped so strange a flame that he recoiled and drew away his hand.

"Ah!" she said, "my cat's eyes frighten you! Are they so very terrible?"

And she made them sweet and tender.

"After all, my dear Duc, it is rather a doughty deed on my part to make a man who has killed tigers as our sportsmen would kill partridges, quail before me."

"You know, Marianne, that I am not quite enough of a child to tremble before you," answered José. "At my age it would be ridiculous. But I am superstitious, like gamesters, or rather, like sailors, who take their lives in their hands, and I have never met you without feeling that I should suffer through you."

"Suffer through me?"

"Yes," answered the Duc, "through you. Do you know one thing? if I had not met you, some five years ago, I should in all probability never have seen the lands which I have described, and, moreover, I should probably have married in Madrid or Toledo?"

"Do you mean that I prevented—"

Rosas interrupted Marianne, saying, in a quick, almost pained tone, accompanied by a nervous laugh:

"Ah! dear friend, if you only knew! You have prevented many things!"

"If I have prevented you from being unhappy I shall be charmed. Besides, I do not think you have ever had any especial vocation for matrimony, or you would never have travelled so much."

"Do you know," continued the Duc, almost as if he had not heard her, "that you have also prevented me from dying like a dog in the corner?"

"I?" repeated Marianne.

"You or your songs. It was in Egypt; I had a fever —something like Typhus. I was left for dead in one of

the poorest and most hideous Fellah villages. I had no medicines, which may possibly be the reason that I recovered—no bed, not even a mattrass. My servants, having no hope of my recovery, left me, or rather, deserted me. There I lay on a pile of damp straw, little better than a dunghill—"

"You, Rosas?"

"Yes; I was another Job. I was emaciated, and my beard was three months' old. I lay out of doors, you understand, but the nights are warm there. At sunset the Fellah women gathered around me, and I watched the effects of the light on their bronzed cheeks. Some of them were very pretty. I have made several sketches from memory, which I will show you some day. They called me every insulting name, which I had the misfortune to understand, because I am an Orientalist"—he smiled—"they pelted me with ill-smelling mud. Charming creatures, were they not? Women, as a rule, do not like men who have fallen. They do not like the weak."

"What have you to say about the Sisters of Charity?"

"Are you certain that they are women, my dear Marianne? But let me tell you my story. I assure you I only asked to die as I lay there. All at once, amid my fever, I heard a voice. I know not whence it came, but it sang an absurd chorus, which you and I heard together one night at the Varietés. And this short song, heard in that strange way amid the desert, transported me instantly to Paris, your face rose before

me, and those light curls over your brow, which I see now, I saw then. I heard your laugh; it even seemed to me that I sat at your side in the proscenium box at the theatre, you, Guy and I—"

It seemed to Marianne that he hesitated a moment as he uttered Guy's name. This hesitation was almost imperceptible, and was felt rather than heard.

Rosas quickly surmounted it, and continued:

"I assure you," he said, "that air absolutely haunted me. I hummed it constantly, and it broke up my fever. You may laugh, but I believe it was so."

"And why? Because you had once heard me sing it?"

"Yes," answered Rosas, in a low voice, "that was precisely the reason."

He leaned toward her as she said, laughingly:

"It is fortunate that Favre is singing in the next room. He has drawn every one in there and has left us alone in this salon. Why do you not go to applaud him—you are fond of music? As for myself, I have not heard him for years."

"You are cruel, Marianne," said the Duc. "Let me snatch this fleeting hour of happiness."

"Happiness?"

"Yes, I am absolutely happy, now; and simply because I am with you, because I can see you and hear your voice!"

"My poor Job!" she replied; "do you wish me to sing you that haunting refrain?"

Rosas did not reply, but gazed at her with his soul in his eyes.

He felt himself in an atmosphere of youth and freshness. At Marianne's side, upon a small table, stood a vase of Cloisonne enamel containing branches of white lilacs, which, when she leaned a little forward, formed almost a wreath around her head. The milk-white blossoms, the leaves of such tender green that they were almost transparent, seemed the very incarnation of spring.

One plume-like spray lay among Marianne's tawny locks. Ah! how difficult it was for Rosas to keep back the words of hitherto unanswered tenderness which rushed to his lips. In this softly lighted salon, among these flowers, he forgot himself and thought only of this woman, whose strange eyes seemed to pierce his very soul.

Distant music—some strain of Gounod's floated into the room.

"Ah! if you knew, Marianne," he said, "how you have accompanied me every step of my way."

"Do you mean that you had my picture?" cried Marianne; "but I was very thin, then, and an awkward girl."

"No, I did not have your portrait. I tore it up one day in a passion."

"You tore it up?"

"Yes; I said to myself that those eyes and those lips belonged to another."

Marianne had grown very pale.

"But I had something better, far better than a portrait, I had memory. I had your very presence, as

pretty as you are to-day. Look at yourself in that mirror, could any one be more lovely?"

"And why?" she said, slowly, each tone of her voice being a caress, "why have you never said this to me before?"

"Before!" answered Rosas, angrily.

She threw her head back on the cushions, and looking intently at this man, as only she could look, approached him almost imperceptibly and whispered in his ear:

"You did not tell me because a man who was your friend, you believed to be my lover. Is not that so?"

"Do not mention him to me!" cried Rosas, abruptly.

"On the contrary, I choose to do so, for I wish to tell you that had I loved him I should not have hesitated one moment to leave him for your sake, but I never loved him!"

"Marianne!"

"You do not believe me? I have never loved him, He was never my lover!'

"I do not ask you to tell me your secrets, and I do not choose to speak of him," said the Duc, who was as pale as death.

"And I, as I said before, do choose to speak of him! Never, do you hear, never was Guy de Lissac my lover. No, in spite of appearances, he never even kissed my lips. I thought, at one time, that I loved him, but I discovered my mistake before it was too late."

"And at that time, I swear to you, I was in daily expectation of hearing you tell me that you loved me."

"That I loved you!"

"Yes," said Marianne, in a choked voice. "Did you not guess that?"

She leaned toward Rosas as she spoke—a faint sigh passed her lips and ruffled the Duc's hair.

Without a word he snatched this woman's hand and drew her close to his side, then pressed his burning lips upon that sweet, fresh mouth.

"I love you, and I loved you!" said Marianne, after this passionate kiss.

Rosas rose—loud bravas greeted the close of the song and people began to enter the salon. Marianne saw her uncle. He seemed to be disputing with Ramel, who looked bored to death. She rose from the divan, also, and extending her hand to the Duc, she said, with a nervous grasp of his fingers:

"There is my uncle—but we will see each other again, shall we not?"

Her eyes scorched Rosas. She turned away and going directly to Kayser, took his arm, leaning upon it as if to show she was not alone, that she had a natural protector and not as deserted as Rosas might have believed.

Kayser seemed much astonished at the eagerness shown by his niece.

"Let us go," she said.

"What! already? There is a supper!"

"Let us sup in the studio," she answered with a little nervous laugh, "and we can discuss Morality in Art." She had attained her end. She felt that anything

more that night would weaken the impression she had made on the Duc. She wished to leave him under the intoxicating influence of that kiss.

"Let us go then," said Kayser, crossly. "I suppose we must if you insist upon it. Ramel," and he turned to the old journalist, "I have some pictures to show you."

"I go out so little," answered Ramel.

"Savage!" said the painter.

"Puritan!" murmured Marianne, as she extended her hand to Dennis Ramel.

Rosas followed her with his eyes until she had disappeared in the adjacent salon, and when she had gone it seemed to him that the blackness of night had fallen on the Japanese salon.

The most profound ennui took possession of him, and while Marianne, in Kayser's studio, went over in her mind all the incidents of the evening, while she saw once more Vaudrey's troubled smile, she seemed to hear again all the Duc's confidences, and said to herself: "It is very strange, de Lissac said almost those same things to me. Are men all so much alike that even when their characters are apparently so different they use the same words to express the same ideas."

While she went over the evening's occurrences the Duc was inveighing against his own stupidity that he should have permitted her to depart in this unsatisfactory way before he had told her.

But what had he to tell her?

Everything. He wished her to know every thought

of his soul. Once he had sworn to himself that this secret should never pass his lips. He had buried his love deep under his Castilian reserve, and yet the first time he met this woman he had been led into making an avowal!

The truth was that he loved her, and had always loved her. In his eyes there was but one woman in the whole world. He told the truth. Marianne's smile had haunted him. He had drunk from her intoxicating eyes a poison that scorched his blood. He belonged to her now. But for Lissac he would certainly have long since returned to Paris to find Mademoiselle Kayser. But Lissac was there. He remembered how well Guy had loved her. He had often walked with Lissac to her very door, and yet she had just told him that Guy had never been her lover.

Could he believe her?

And why should she lie to him? What motive could she have.

Rosas felt more and more discontented with himself, and all at once determined to depart. He felt that he could endure this crowd no longer. He must find refuge in solitude.

In order to avoid Madame Marsy, who was probably looking for him then, he cautiously made his way toward the door and got into the ante-room without taking leave. He was putting on his overcoat, when he heard Guy's voice at his elbow.

"Are you going then, my dear Duc? Suppose we walk together."

The proposition was not displeasing to Rosas. "Perhaps," he said to himself, "there may be some little conversation about Marianne." These persons were generally together in his mind. He was really fond of Guy, too. They had so many recollections in common: fêtes and suppers, gay hours and sad ones, and had not seen each other for so long.

Rosas enjoyed being with Guy once more on the Boulevard. It seemed to bring back his lost youth. Many was the knotty problem they had discussed and settled as they walked arm and arm over these same stones.

"Paris has one singular property," said Rosas. "It takes you up at once and you forget that you ever left it. I have hardly unpacked my trunks, and yet I am once more a Parisian."

"Paris is like absinthe," answered Guy. "As soon as a bottle is uncorked, you must drain the last drop!"

"How you Frenchmen calumniate Paris! Why should you compare it to absinthe?"

"You have not been here two days, and yet you are already intoxicated with Paris. You said so, yourself. The hasheesh of the Boulevard!"

"It may be that it is not Paris alone that has intoxicated me."

"Very likely. It is a Parisienne, of course. This Madame Marsy is certainly very pretty!"

"Yes, she is charming," answered Rosas coldly.

"But not as charming as Mademoiselle Kayser!"

Guy blew away a little smoke from his cigar and

awaited a response from the Duc, but José walked along by the side of his friend without saying one word, and Lissac, who had allowed the conversation to drop, sought to resume it.

"Then," he said abruptly, "you have returned to Paris to remain some time?"

"I have made no plans."

"You have no idea, I trust, of starting off on another journey?"

"I am not to be depended upon. No one knows, for I do not know myself what my next move will be!"

"Take my advice," said Lissac, laughingly, "and establish yourself in Paris. We want you here, you are no longer a Spainard. You are a Parisian born, as I have told you a dozen times. You admit that this is the best place in the world; why then go elsewhere?"

"My dear Guy," said the Duc abruptly, he had not heard one word that Lissac had been saying, "will you promise me to answer frankly a delicate question? It is one of those questions which men rarely ask each other, but which I shall address to you."

"To this as to all other questions, Duc, I shall reply as an honorable man, and as a friend and neighbor ought to do."

"You have loved Mademoiselle Kayser?"

"Very much."

"She loved you—a little?"

"Not at all."

"That was not what she told me just now."

"Ah!" said Lissac, tossing his cigar away, "you have been talking of me?"

"She told me that at one time she believed herself to be sincerely attached to you."

"That is precisely what I told you."

"And—Marianne?"

"Marianne?" repeated Lissac, who knew perfectly well what the Duc wished to say.

"My dear friend, when a man is weak enough, or mad enough, call it which you please, to stake his life on one throw of the dice, he may possibly be allowed to ask an unusual question, and you can tell me what probably no man in the world but myself would venture to ask of you. Have you been Marianne's lover?"

Before replying, Guy took the Duc's arm in a friendly way, and at once felt that it trembled nervously, and his hand, which he accidentally touched, was hot with fever.

"My dear fellow," said Lissac, "you touch on that eternal question of duty to a friend and duty to a woman. Had I been Marianne's lover, I should still deem it my duty to tell you that she had never been my mistress. These falsehoods are enjoined upon us. No, I have not been Marianne's lover, but I advise you, unless you wish to be thoroughly miserable, not to seek that position yourself. You are one of those men who open their hearts wide as a *porte cochère*; she is one of those women who calculate and pursue their aims without faltering. She may well be flattered at having you for her admirer, as I have been, or as a lover, as I am told other men have been; but of this I know

nothing, you understand. She may be touched by your affection, but she is a thorough Parisienne, and no more capable of loving you as you deserve to be loved than you are capable of deceiving her as it is said she has been deceived."

"Deceived?" asked Rosas, in a tone of compassion that struck Lissac very forcibly.

"Yes. Is not deception the mutual school of love?"

"Then if I loved Marianne?"

"I should advise you first to tell her so and then to prove it to her, and finally to place this love in the album, the ashes of which usually lie in the marriage corbeille!"

"You speak of Mademoiselle Kayser as if she were a *fille*," said the Duc, in a constrained voice.

"Ah! I give you my word," answered Lissac, "that were I to speak of Mademoiselle Antonia or Mademoiselle Cecelia it would be in a very different way. I should say frankly—They are pretty creatures but there is no danger."

"Do you mean, then, that there is danger with Marianne?"

"I do indeed—for you."

"And why not for you?"

"Simply, my dear Duc, because I contented myself with loving her as you have hitherto loved her, and because I, as I told, was fortunate enough not to be her lover!"

"You took her to Madame Marsy's?"

"I certainly did."

"You offered your arm, then, to a woman whom you look upon as dangerous?"

"Not to Sabine. I look upon Marianne, to tell the truth, as a drop of that absinthe, that hasheesh, of which I was speaking to you. One lives only by concessions in Paris, and when one is dead, one needs concessions even more, I fancy. It is a hard matter when a gallant man like yourself (and Lissac became very serious), asks you a question like the one you have asked me, to say no more than what I have just said: Look out, my friend, look out!"

"I thank you, heartily," said Rosas, standing still on the sidewalk. "You are a sincere friend."

"And if I seem too severe," added Lissac, laughing, "you can set that down to my disappointment. A man who has loved a woman is never very just toward her. If he does not love her he misunderstands her, and if he loves her he calumniates her. I may have calumniated Marianne, but I have not misunderstood you. Now, what do you intend to do?"

"I will write to you," answered the Duc. "I may leave Paris."

"Really?"

"Really."

"Deuce take it all!" cried Lissac. "I should be very uneasy if I thought you were flying from the danger in question."

"It is not a flight," answered the Duc, gravely, "it is a caprice."

The two men separated, less pleased with each

other than they had been in the beginning of their interview.

Lissac carried away the impression that he had in some way wounded Rosas, while the Spaniard with his reserved nature reproached Guy in his heart, for jesting on a matter so grave.

He returned to his hôtel, his servant was waiting for him and brought a blue envelope on his tray.

"A dispatch, Sir."

The Duc tore it open. One of his London friends who had heard of his return, begged him to come to him. He could not come to Paris himself, as was his wish, because he was kept at home by political business.

The Duc, as he took off his gloves, gazed fixedly at this dispatch as it lay on the table with the light from the lamp full upon it.

Rosas was very superstitious. Perhaps, this dispatch had arrived at the moment it did, to prevent his being guilty of a folly.

What folly?

His lips yet burned with Marianne's kiss. To-morrow, his first thought would be to see this woman, and to snatch another intoxicating draught. Lissac had spoken of danger. Marianne's feline eyes had perilous light gleaming from under their long lashes, but they were adorable all the same.

Guy had spoken of danger, and perhaps he was right, the best loves are those never culled, and

which remain incomplete like a late spring flower destined never to become fruit. Lord Lindsay's dispatch came at the right moment. Was it chance or a warning? In any event, what would he lose were he to pass several days in London. The sea breezes would efface this kiss, perhaps.

"I was mad, I think," said the Duc, quite disgusted with himself. "Why did I mention her to Lissac at all? It would have been much better had I spoken only to her!"

Lissac had been imprudent in using the word danger to Rosas, for to the Spaniard it had an attraction.

The thing that irritated the Duc was Lissac's saying to him that he had not been Marianne's lover, but that Marianne had had lovers.

What did Lissac know about it? A jealous rage now fired the blood in the veins of the Duc. He wanted to know the truth, he wanted to see Marianne again. He wished he had never returned to Paris, and never entered Sabine Marsy's house.

"So be it! I will go to Lord Lindsay," he said.

The next morning, Guy de Lissac found in his mail a small envelope sealed with the Duc's arms, and bearing this motto, "*Hasta la Muerte.*"

José wrote that he was on the point of leaving Paris.

"You are right, I am a little intoxicated. My brain is not clear. I am going to London to visit a friend, and if I relate my travels it will only be before the

members of the Geographical Society. There, at least, is no 'danger.' Thanks, and a speedy meeting.

"Your Friend,

"J. DE ROSAS."

"Zounds!" muttered Lissac, as he read this letter for the third time, "he is terribly hit, this dear Duc. This time Marianne Kayser has a sure hold, I think. We will see, however," he added, as he broke the seal of another letter written by a man less well off than himself, who wished to borrow money.

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW DEPARTURE.

THAT evening at Sabine Marsy's had left its mark on Vaudrey. He awoke the next morning with an aching head after a night of feverish dreams, which had been haunted by the image of this lovely woman standing before him, and laughing as she daintily ate an ice with a gold spoon.

Each morning since he had been made Minister, Sulpice had sprung up joyously to greet a new day. He looked about the stately rooms, and threw open his window to look down into the commonplace garden which so many Ministers, and which he, in his turn, now called "my garden." His thoughts then wandered to the garden at Grenoble, what a distance he had travelled since those days, and how good it was to live.

This morning, however, he thought the trees black and bare of leaves, and the garden very dreary. He felt himself to be out of temper. He had been waked at an early hour to receive the dispatches from the country. His mind was not on his work. He thought of Marianne, of her loveliness, of her blue satin robe, and of the light tendrils on her brow. Had he been at liberty, he would have gone to seek this woman that very morning. He felt a certain pleasure in being

thus disturbed, and haunted. He felt rejuvenated. He had several times in his life been pursued by waking dreams, but it was when he was a much younger man.

It was, too, when he was a man of much less consequence than to-day—and a Minister has something else to do; he must not be haunted by visions.

Sulpice dressed in haste and descended to his cabinet, where some oaken logs crackled and blazed in a grate of ancient form. He took his seat in front of a large mahogany desk, covered with papers, and opened a large, black portfolio, on which was incribed in large letters:

"The Minister of the Interior."

In the centre of the desk, on a tray, lay an accumulation of papers ticketed:

"For the signature of Monsieur Le Ministre." By the side of this were reports with three letters printed in one corner.

Vaudrey seated himself in his arm-chair with the profound satisfaction of a person who has drawn a prize in a lottery, and not yet sure of it. The great salon, with its pictures black with age, pleased him greatly; he walked through it every morning before he seated himself to his work. The first thing he did every morning was to read the reports of the Prefect.

This morning he took up this report. There was nothing of importance. A little accident on the Vincennes railroad, near the fortifications of Paris—several persons slightly injured—all was calm and quiet.

The new Minister had evidently been received with confidence.

With a pleased smile Sulpice took up the Report sent by the Director of the Press. With the exception of a few minor and unimportant journals which continued to sulk, all the French and foreign newspapers praised with much warmth the Minister who had just risen above the political horizon. The Times assured its readers that the combination exactly filled the needs of the situation. The Berlin journals had no fault to find, although Monsieur Vaudrey had more than once exhibited his warlike patriotism in the Tribune.

In short, concluded the daily Report, the newspapers all sing a chorus of praise and public opinion is enchanted at having at last, through the selection of the homogeneous Ministry so long and anxiously desired—obtained full satisfaction.

"This is a droll sort of literature!" murmured Sulpice, half aloud, as he tossed this report away.

He remembered how coldly and automatically the compiler of this daily Bulletin had laid it on the Minister's table the first morning that Sulpice seated himself in that room. In that report the following sentence occurred:

"Public opinion, through the mouthpiece of the only journals which are trustworthy, has for too long a time demonstrated its confidence in the Pichereau Ministry not to feel that the change which appoints Monsieur Vaudrey is both unwise and unnecessary."

And it was to Vaudrey, who stood on the débris of the shattered Pichereau, that this Report was handed.

"These men who write these reports must be optimists," thought Sulpice. "Ministers do not like truths, I presume!"

This was a busy morning for Vaudrey. Prefect after Prefect came in at the large door of the Ministerial mansion, and were shown into the vast anterooms on the left, while friends and acquaintances made their way into the rooms on the left and tried to wheedle the *huissier* into taking their cards into the Secretary in Chief or to Monsieur Le Ministre. Some of these persons called the Minister "Monsieur Vaudrey," in order to appear to know him more familiarly.

Sulpice felt himself besieged on all sides and blockaded in his cabinet. He, however, received all these people with smiles and a cordial shake of the hand—promising willingly, and glad to promise, for he hated to see a shadow on any human face. From time to time, however, amid the pressure of Administrative duties, Marianne's disquieting smile floated before him like lightning from out dark clouds, and while the Minister shook his head slowly and gravely, as if he fully understood what was being said, Vaudrey himself was far from them, standing in front of a brilliantly lighted buffet, watching a golden spoon touching scarlet lips. Amid this crowd of applicants—Deputies soliciting positions for their constituents, demanding the removal of Mayors, the decoration of Electoral agents, harassing the Minister with recommendations

and prayers, made in a tone of humility, under which lurked a menace, Vaudrey saw none of his friends. It was a wearying succession of indifferent persons or of watchful enemies. Although he had been Minister so short a time, this man already had a vague sensation that the Ministerial mansion belonged to this horde of people who inhabited the ante-rooms and the corridors, who were known to the *huissiers*, and to whom, it mattered not who the Minister might be.

The clerks saluted these people with an air of intimacy, as if they were old acquaintances whose intrepid assurance survived all Ministerial combinations.

These persons entered Vaudrey's cabinet with an easy air, as if they well knew the road, and felt at home. Sulpice had more than once heard them salute the *huissier* by his Christian name—"How are you, Gustave!" And the Minister said to Gustave: "Who is that gentleman?"

Gustave replied, with but a shade of respect:

"One of our visitors, Sir Monsieur Eugène Renaudier. We always call him Monsieur Eugène. We have known him always."

This "Monsieur Eugène" had already asked for a Préfecture or a Sub-Préfecture, or for any place which the Minister would give him.

His claims? None whatever.

The Minister felt crushed by this accumulation of petitions and applications. At this moment a card was brought in. *Lucien Granet* was engraved upon it. Granet was supposed to have no especial liking for

Vaudrey, and Sulpice felt sure that he intended to become his successor. All the more reason, therefore, for being especially amiable toward him.

"What does he want now?" said the Minister to himself. This Granet was a type. He represented the Minister of to-morrow, the inevitable coming man, the reformer, the appointed cleaner of the Augean stables; he who intended, at some future date, to remedy all abuses, small or large.

"Ah! if Granet were only Minister!"

The unappreciated artist consoled himself with the perspective of the coming Granet Ministry. He would have orders for monuments then. The actor who looked toward the *Comédie Française* with longing eyes had hope only through Granet. Granet promised every actress an engagement in la Rue de Richelieu.

"When the Granet Ministry is in," was the constant cry of theatrical Paris, and while awaiting this auspicious day, pretty actresses, whose smiles were as good as a prospective portfolio, besieged Granet's antechamber.

Granet had, therefore, an infinity of clients of both sexes, who were sighing for his aggrandizement, intriguing for his promotion, and glorifying him in advance.

"Ah! if Granet were in power!"

"Such abuses would never take place under a Granet Ministry!"

"All will be changed when Granet is Minister!"

"Dear Granet! Good Granet! Long live Granet!"

Vaudrey knew this, and knew that for some time Jules Granet had laid claim to a portfolio, the most important one, of course. It was the merest chance that Granet had not been in the last combination. He had then been Vaudrey's colleague instead of his rival. Sulpice preferred to have him for an adversary than for a neighbor at the Council table.

"Well," said the Minister to Granet, who came in smiling and careful as usual in his toilet, "you have come to see your future abode."

"My abode!" cried Granet, who was anxious to make himself agreeable. Heaven forbid! It is too well occupied now."

"You are very kind, my dear Granet."

"Far from coveting your position, I have come to give you some advice that will consolidate the situation, which, let me now say, I consider superb."

"Any advice from you ought to be good, my dear colleague. Go on."

"It is a question, my dear Minister, of the nomination of an Assistant Secretary of State for the Interior, and I have come to beg you to interest yourself in the appointment of our colleague, Warcolier, who is a friend of mine."

As he spoke, Granet seated himself near the Minister's desk, and examined Vaudrey through his glass. He saw that Sulpice bit his lip and hesitated before he replied.

"But I am in favor of Jacquin (de l'Oise)", he said, abruptly.

Granet smiled. Jacquin was an excellent choice, of course. He was cool and determined, and knew what he was about, but he was totally without influence in the Chamber. He was unpopular, and his reserve amounted almost to sulkiness. Warcolier, however, was very different. He was a brilliant speaker, and had a magnetic effect upon his audience.

"My personal friend, too, my dear Minister, and I assure you that it would be a great disappointment to me if you did not support Warcolier in the Cabinet meeting of this morning, when Warcolier ought, without question, to be nominated as Assistant Secretary of State. There is a meeting this morning, is there not?"

"Yes—in an hour."

Granet left the Cabinet, saying again that Vaudrey ought to use his influence to secure Warcolier's appointment. It would be in every way preferable to that of Jacquin.

"He is a perfect bear," added Granet, as he adjusted his eye-glass, "and bears are never popular!"

Vaudrey was greatly annoyed to see that Warcolier had already *worked* the ground.

Warcolier was no more acceptable to him than was Granet himself. Warcolier took things too lightly, he was always pleased, and Sulpice did not like persons who were satisfied with the existing state of things. After having been an Imperialist under the Empire he was a Republican under the Republic. An epicurean, clever, witty and attentive, he thought things were

going smoothly as soon as he had anything to do with them. He did not like frowning brows nor discontent. Having an excellent digestion himself, he had no sympathy for any diseases of the stomach. Living on the fat of the land, he would not admit that any one was hungry.

All was good, all was gay, all was prosperous in his eyes. Even in temper, admirably poised, he was never angry nor envious. Considering himself superior to all about him, Warcolier instituted no comparisons. He did not prefer himself, he simply lavished on himself the most unquestioning adoration. The world belonged to him. He trod the soil with a firm step and head held high, apparently drinking in the perfume of triumph.

Warcolier had written a book which he entitled "*A History of Work and of Workers.*" He dedicated it to His Majesty Napoleon III., with these opening words:

"To you, Sire, who have substituted for a nobility of work that of birth, and for blood shed for our country, that which was transmitted to you from your ancestors," etc.

In 1848, Warcolier found it necessary to re-write his dedication, and a new edition was looked for with interest. But he was not long in cutting the knot. His former work was dedicated to one sovereign and this to another. The change was not difficult.

"To you, the People, who have substituted nobility

of work for that of birth, and blood shed for your country for that transmitted from your ancestors," etc.

And the name of Warcolier formerly seen on proclamations headed, "Appeal to Honest Men—a revolution is impending," was now read on later proclamations which called on all good citizens to be on their guard, "a reaction is at hand!"

And this was the man whom Granet and his friends were determined to push into office, to make Assistant Secretary of State! Vaudrey intended to make his opinions upon this subject known to the President. The hour of the Cabinet meeting was near at hand. Sulpice saw through the white curtains at his window that his coupé was standing waiting in the court-yard, although there was so short a distance from the Place Beauvan to the l'Elyseé. He placed the reports of the Prefect of Police and of the Director of the Press into his portfolio, and was about leaving the room, when a new card was brought in.

"I can see no one," he said hastily.

"The gentleman told me sir, that if Monsieur Le Ministre saw his name, he would certainly be admitted."

Vaudrey tood the card from the salver.

"Jéliotte! He is right, show him in!"

He took off his hat and went at once to the door to receive a man with a pale, thin face, and with long, black whiskers set as a frame around it. He was an old associate at the law school. Jéliotte entered with a ceremonious bow to Sulpice, who offered both hands to this companion of his youth.

"How glad I am to see you!" said Vaudrey.

"I am glad to find that you have not forgotten me!" answered Jéliotte, showing his yellow teeth in a rather disagreeable smile.

"I should think not! Do I deserve to hear you say such a thing as that?"

"Your honors have not changed you, certainly," said Jéliotte, "as I am rejoiced to discover. You ask me how I am? Well, of course. And how I am getting on? I work all the time as usual, that is about all I can say. I watch you from a distance, and applaud your success."

When he uttered the word "success," Jéliotte, now seated on the edge of a chair and looking down into his hat, moved his jaws as if cracking a nut between his long teeth.

"I was delighted to hear of your advancement. Delighted for your sake—"

"And you may be for your own, also, my good Jéliotte. Anything that I can do for you at any time—"

Jéliotte interrupted the Minister with a little dry cough, that sounded like a match going off.

"Oh! my dear Sulpice," he said, "I shall never ask anything of you."

"And why, pray?"

"Because—no, never mind!"

"You make a great mistake, then—"

"No, you have applicants enough in your path—"

"That is very true—"

"And I cannot flatter or entreat. I am your friend."

"And you have a right to be, for I have the greatest esteem for you—"

"I do not believe you have a friend in the world more devoted to you than I am, but I should regard it as absolute baseness on my part to ask any favor from you. I am ready to serve you and watch over your interests, to warn you when I see danger impending. I prefer, however, to remain where and as I am. I of course do not yet know what effect honors may produce on you—"

"Jéliotte! Come now!"

"Yes, I mean what I say, and as I do not choose to be confounded with the vulgar crowd that haunts your ante room—"

"Precisely. You must never be kept waiting there—"

"No, not yet. I came this morning simply to see if I should be received. And I have satisfied myself on that point. And now I shall disappear, after I have told you that you will never see me while you are Minister."

"Ah! Jéliotte! Jéliotte!"

"No, never, but after you fall—for fall you will—you need not be afraid of my turning my back on you!"

"You are very kind," said Sulpice, laughing.

"Whatever you have done or said,—and Power intoxicates a man—I will hold out my hand to you. You will see plenty of people who will turn their backs on you then, but I am not one of those."

"This is a promise then!"

"I leave you to your triumph, Vaudrey. I beg your pardon, I ought to have said Monsieur Le Ministre, but my tongue has not yet learned that trick. I am not the courtier of success. I wait for evil days to come."

"But you will come back?"

"Only after your fall."

"Upon my word, you are a cheerful visitor," cried Vaudrey.

"I am made that way. I love my friends in my own fashion."

"When they are on the ground, you mean!" answered the Minister.

"Precisely!" and Jéliotte nodded assent.

"And is that all you have to say to me?" asked the Minister.

"Is it not enough?'

"Yes; I think on the whole, it is enough! *Au revoir*, Jéliotte!"

"*Au revoir*! Until—you know when?"

"Yes, when I feel a storm in the air, I will send for you."

"Be in readiness, you may not have to wait long."

"The idiot!" muttered Sulpice angrily, when the lawyer had vanished.

He snatched his hat with an air of vexation, and hurried down to his carriage, while the *huissiers* in the ante-room rose to salute him as he passed.

It was not necessary to give any orders to the

coachman. Each hour of the day was mapped out, and the coachman knew as well as the Minister that there was a Cabinet meeting at the Elysée.

Sulpice was a little nervous. This visit of Jéliotte, following on that of Granet, had given him a very bad idea of the human race. He had never been envious of any one, and it seemed to him that the entire world ought to accept his success as a simple matter of course.

"For after all I have triumphed, and Jéliotte is clever enough to know that there are many persons who, in my place, would put on airs!"

And he at once decided that he was a very modest individual.

The carriage drew up at the Elysée. Sulpice felt a thrill of delight as he stepped from his coupé, with his portfolio against his breast, upon the Moquette carpet which covered the stone steps leading to the Council room. He walked through a living hedge. Eager hands were extended to take his overcoat. He did not know who the men were, for they bowed so respectfully that he saw only the tops of their heads, bald or covered with hair, as they bent low before him.

His colleagues were assembled, and waiting in a salon of white and gold,—the eternal salon of all official apartments with their inevitable Sevres vases, with their blue grounds, standing on the console tables or pedestals. Each Minister held his portfolio under his arm more or less stuffed with papers. Suddenly, the door opened, the *huissiers* separated, and the Presi-

dent, with his accustomed gravity, took his usual place opposite the President of the Council, while the Ministers advanced to their respective seats, the Minister of the Interior on the left of the President of the Republic, the Minister of Foreign Affairs on his right.

Then, in turn, each Minister in succession, beginning on the left, said what he considered necessary relative to the affairs of his department. Each of them having finished his statement, bowed to his neighbor on the right, saying:

"I have finished, it is now your turn, my dear colleague."

The President listened. Sulpice, seated before this green table, suffered his thoughts to wander at times from the matters in hand. He recalled the green tables in the council room at the Grenoble Préfecture, for this Assembly reminded him of some of his provincial experiences. Sometimes a line of poetry came into his head when some eloquent phrase reached his ear, and he was obliged to remind himself that he was in the salon of the Elyseé and these men seated there before their open portfolios represented France, his beloved France, and that within those portfolios were the secrets, the very fate of his country!

And Sulpice, happy in the exercise of power, settled himself with satisfaction in this arm-chair which he had begun to regard as his own. He was occasionally and sharply recalled to reality, when that thin man with a gray moustache, the Minister of War, dropped a few words in which, under the laconic phraseology of a soldier, it was easy to divine a hope or an anxiety.

Sulpice listened, more moved than he chose to appear, seeking in his turn to hide all his nervousness as a patriot, under a mask, like that of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for example, who, with dull eyes and rigid features, looked as if carved out of wood.

The business of the morning was not of any special importance. The Keeper of the Seals, Monsieur Collard, of Nantes, a heavy apopletic looking man, short-breathed and round-eyed, submitted to the President, who listened in austere silence, a certain plan of reform to which Vaudrey was perfectly indifferent. He did not hear one word of his colleague's heavy discourse, who wandered off into a mass of useless side issues, while the Minister of War glanced at him with eyes that seemed as ready to flash as the mouth of a gun, and who looked as though he wanted to say, with an oath, in soldier fashion:

"Be done with all this nonsense!"

Vaudrey looked out at the gray, wintry sky and leafless trees, and watched the sparrows twittering among the branches. His thoughts were far away from this table, where interminable phrases were pouring out from the lips of the Minister of Justice as from an open faucet.

He saw a vision at the end of the garden—a vision clothed in pale blue, a vision of her whom he had seen the previous evening. He beheld once more the fleeting vision which had so puzzled him—he heard her voice. How charming she was! And her name, too, pleased him—Marianne!

It was years since Vaudrey had felt this delicious trouble, or had been in the least moved by any woman. His first thought when he awoke was Marianne, as it was his last at night—

She was certainly very charming!

"It is the turn of the Minister of the Interior."

Vaudrey had not even noticed that Monsieur Collard had finished speaking, nor had he heard one word spoken by the two Ministers who followed. He hesiated for a moment—he needed an instant of reflection to realize what was meant by the title of the Minister of the Interior. Vaudrey's colleagues had not perceived, however, that he, seated at their side, was lost in a dream. Sulpice had but little to say, and nothing of special importance. He gave a rapid *resumé* of the reports submitted to him, and requested the Council of Ministers to occupy themselves immediately with the appointments of the Assistant Secretaries of State.

It was then that Vaudrey perceived the singular influence exercised by Lucien Granet. After the first ten words of the discussion, the Minister felt that his candidate, Jacquier (de l'Oisè), was beaten in advance by Warcolier. Granet had attacked the Ministers one by one. The President himself was in favor of Warcolier. "He wished, moreover," he said, "to encourage new converts, and to show that the Government was not closed to the repentant."

"That is a very Christian theory," said Vaudrey, "but while I am not in favor of Jacobinism nor of

suspicion, yet I feel that in these alms given to these deserters there is something almost ironical."

"But most sagacious, in a political sense," said Collard.

"Prizes then are to be offered to converts?"

"Upon my word, I don't think that would be a bad thing!"

Vaudrey saw that it was utterly useless to say another word — he must submit to Warcolier. He could now only do his best to prevent this man from obtaining any executive power.

Warcolier was nominated. The President would sign his appointment as soon as possible.

Vaudrey was nervous and annoyed by this fresh triumph of Granet's. But what could he do? He listened to the communications made by his colleagues. The Minister of War took up the word now, and with considerable astonishment Vaudrey heard him talk of coats and caps, of shakos and buttons on gaiters. This was all. It might have been the report of a tailor or a furnisher.

Sulpice was anxious for the Council to come to a close. The President, however, before giving the long looked for signal, said a few words of caution.

"No innovations, gentlemen, move slowly and carefully. Let us be satisfied with things as they are! The Council is adjourned."

Vaudrey had a very different idea of power himself. He wished to make use of new ideas, and to make his epoch memorable. He felt that if the counsel of the

President was adhered to, any one of the clerks in the Bureau would make as good a Minister as himself!

As he was leaving the Council room, the Minister of War said to him, jestingly:

"You don't seem to be pleased with the nomination of Warcolier. Pshaw! If he has changed shoulders it only proves that he understands the Manual of Arms, that is all!" And the soldier laughed at his own clever simile.

Vaudrey entered his carriage and drove home to breakfast. Breakfast was generally to Sulpice an hour of infinite happiness and joyous liberty. He felt when with Adrienne a sense of rest, and forgot for a moment his daily struggle. In their home in the Chaussée d'Antin he had been in the habit of talking freely and gayly. His wife found again, in this man of forty, the young husband of their early married life. But in the presence of all these solemn domestics, who were part of the furniture of the Ministerial mansion, and who seemed to be guardians rather than servants, he hardly ventured to speak. He felt as if every word would be repeated. He divined that these men were instituting comparisons between the present Minister and those who had departed. Once, in reply to something Adrienne had said, one of these servants replied: "Monsieur Pichereau, Madame, who preceded the present Minister, and Le Comte d'Horville, who came before Monsieur Pichereau, never found any fault with the manner in which I performed my duties."

Adrienne accepted as best she could the duties of

her new situation. She was resigned to the luxurious solitude of these vast rooms, since it was necessary that she should dwell in them. The Hôtel seemed to her like a prison, in which the joys of home could have no part. She missed her pleasant rooms which she had furnished with so much taste, and with such happiness, and felt half lost in these salons which were cold in spite of steam pipes, which, with their faded gilding, their commonplace ornaments, reminded her of a Hôtel.

With a faint, melancholy smile Adrienne answered the occasional friends who came to see her on her day and congratulated her on living in a Palace.

"Yes—but I should prefer my own house and my own furniture!"

Sulpice, having completed his morning work of receptions and a Cabinet Council, sent to tell Madame that he had returned. Adrienne, looking very lovely in her close-fitting, black velvet robe, came to meet him with a smile, which faded when she saw his pre-occupation. She dared not question him, but said, gently:

"You look annoyed, my dear Sulpice."

He briefly explained the Warcolier affair.

"Is that all? You must not take it so much to heart, for I am afraid you will have many similar ones." And she smiled gently. "Think of me a little now, Sulpice. Do you love me?" and she held up her pretty face to be kissed, but drew back hurriedly as a servant entered, to announce with ceremony that breakfast was served.

Vaudrey ate, but without appetite. Adrienne watched him with anxious eyes. "It is a pity," she said to herself, that he allows himself to be worried in this way!" She was about to say something of the kind to him, but he made a sign to her to be silent. The servants were listening.

Adrienne, like Sulpice, felt all the annoyance of this *surveillance*. She had been hungry when she took her seat at the table, but now her appetite had vanished. The viands came in cold, brought on dishes decorated with different designs, marked with the cipher of Louis Philippe—L. P. interlaced—or with the Imperial N—, its gold lines half worn off. It was a Sevres service, which had been long in use in more than one Imperial dwelling and National palace, and finally sent, with other odds and ends, to the various Ministerial residences.

Adrienne, instead of eating, looked down on these ciphers and thought. It seemed to her that she was in a dismal Restaurant, where badly served dishes were presented to her.

Sulpice hardly opened his lips. His brain was busy with thoughts of Granet and Warcolier, while at the same time the image of Marianne never disturbed him. He was vexed with himself, vexed at the persistence with which this vision haunted him.

In vain did Adrienne try to make him smile. She herself was saddened, without precisely knowing why, and if she succeeded in arousing her husband he only uttered some short sentence and relapsed into silence.

She had often seen him thus when he was anxious and troubled. Had they been in their old home, she, with her arms around his neck, would have said, between her tender kisses:

"Tell me all about it, dear; let me comfort you!"

But before all these servants she was compelled to sit still in her chair, and content herself with watching her husband's face. She had not seen him thus absorbed and out of spirits since he became Minister.

She could refrain no longer.

"You are not well, I fear," she cried, hastily.

"Yes, I am perfectly well, but—"

His glance explained what he would have said, that he could not talk then and there. Before these cold, observant eyes, whose obsequious manners might easily conceal hostile intentions, he, of course, could not speak. The time was past for precious confidences and laughs and kisses.

"Serve coffee at once," she said.

She was eager to find herself in her own apartment, alone with her husband. But he, as if he dreaded a tête-à-tête, said he would go out for a while.

"I need air. I will take a little drive in the Bois—that will make me feel better."

"And you will take me?" she cried, joyously.

"If you wish," he said, slowly, and then added: "The truth is, my dear, I am better alone. I am fretted and overworked, and I need entire solitude."

"As you choose," answered Adrienne, a little hurt, but submissive. "It would have been very nice,

though, if we could have gone to the Bois together. But of course you are right. Go and take the air while the sun shines so brightly. I shall be only too glad if you will come home looking a little more like yourself."

Sulpice gazed at his young wife with a pain at his heart, which was not unlike remorse. There was such tenderness in her eyes. He knew that Adrienne loved him truly and faithfully, and that she had entire confidence in him. He was half inclined to beg her to put on her cloak and go with him, but at the same time he was intensely anxious to be alone with the thoughts and the image which absorbed him. It almost seemed to him that if he left Adrienne at home he should see Marianne.

He therefore simply repeated that it was better for him to go alone. The next day he would drive with her, he said, and they would breakfast at Saint Cloud or at Ville d'Auray.

"Are you in earnest?" said Adrienne.

"I am, indeed. I feel that I must tear myself away from all my honors for a while."

And Sulpice laughed.

"I am tired of them," he said as he kissed his wife, who had colored brightly at the thought of playing truant the next day with her husband.

"What a color you have!" said Sulpice, all unconscious.

"Have I?" she replied, a little disturbed. "Do you think I have too much color?" she asked, anxiously.

"My complexion is certainly very unlike that of the women about me. But you need not be troubled, it will vanish soon if you remain Minister long."

She kissed him again and he departed, glad to be free at last.

At last! He had escaped from the whirl of his life, from questions and applications, from the excitement which he adored but which left him sometimes utterly exhausted, with an aching head and feverish pulse at the end of the day. He was his own master—master of his thoughts and his looks.

He had sometimes in the tumult of political life, longed for repose, longed to vegetate in a corner of the earth, and live a life which was different from the constant pressure under which he existed in Paris.

But years had gone on, he had become accustomed to the excitement, to living as it were at the point of the bayonet. He was happy because his ambition was fully satisfied, because he exercised over his fellow-men an influence which caused him to be adored by his lovely wife. He would have been looked upon as supremely ridiculous had he complained of his destiny, and yet, in the depths of his heart, he felt that he was not content, that there was something lacking, but what that something was he knew not. He had dreamed in his youth of many things far inferior to those which years had brought him, and yet when he analyzed these very realities he felt that the fair promises of his dreams were more intoxicating than the realities he had attained.

Vaudrey was ambitious. Once it had seemed to him that life was made up of triumphs, of trumpet blasts, and waving banners. He had imagined conquests and victories. Now, he would have been content with semi-triumphs of his restless spirit, could even have been satisfied with anything which he had acquired.

Adrienne loved him, and he really loved his wife.

Why had he been so disturbed ever since he met this Marianne? It was plain that Mademoiselle Kayser appealed to a side of his nature which Adrienne had never touched. It seemed to Vaudrey, sometimes, that he had never really lived; to do so was at once his terror and his desire. It seemed to him the evening before, when he met this strange woman and she looked at him through her long lashes, that a curtain at the theatre had gone up and displayed some dazzling fancy scene, and this impression had not yet faded. He carried it with him through all his long drive, and while the coupé rolled along the Faubourg Saint Honore toward the Arc-de-Triomphe, the Minister, who two hours previous had been wrapped in affairs of State, lay back in a corner wrapped in rugs, looking at without seeing the passers-by, the sunny *façades* of the houses, and the dry pavements, while he dreamed of those wonderful eyes and of those black butterflies, one on her breast, the other in her fluttering blonde hair, like swallows hovering over a field of ripe wheat.

It pleased him to think of this woman; it was an entirely new occupation, and a most curious sensation which seemed to restore to him much of his lost youth.

He felt almost as if he were twenty again, and forgot the white hairs on his temples. He determined to see this Mademoiselle Kayser once more, at least, he would do his best to do so, and would see that she received an invitation to the next Ministerial Reception.

At the same moment he remembered Ramel, of whom he was so fond and whom he intended to invite, and whom he also wished to see again. It was he himself who, in the days of his journalism and his battles in the *Nation Française*, had called Denis a conscience in a black coat. And now it occurred to him that as he had a leisure afternoon, he could not do better than spend it with Ramel; he wished to prove to him that without his aid he would never have been Minister.

"Rue Boursault," he said to the coachman.

The carriage turned toward the right, and reached the outer Boulevard through the Parc Morceau.

Vaudrey was enchanted. He was about to have a long talk with an old friend. It was a shame for him to live there in seclusion and love his friends, as Jéliotte said, only when they were down. At all events, Vaudrey would turn to him for advice, and Ramel should have a hand in the Government of the country in spite of himself.

The Minister did not know the house in which Ramel had lived for some little time. He expected to find respectable poverty and a dreary room; he found on the contrary, a working man's home transformed by the taste of an artist into a little museum. On the

third floor of a small house in la Rue Boursault, after passing through a narrow corridor and up steep, winding stairs, Vaudrey rang and entered a room all bright with sunshine. There were engravings in antique frames hanging on the wall. A mahogany book-case, simple in form, contained a few books with penciled marginal notes. It was a small apartment, a tiny bedroom with its iron bed, a dressing-cabinet and a dining-room with cane-seated chairs, the small, well lighted salon or library with its portraits and engravings. Everything was in exquisite order.

This modest establishment, these books, the profound silence to be found in Batignolles, which is the home of employés, was just what Ramel wanted. He rarely went out, and then only to take the air and returned quickly. He had worked hard all his life, giving to journalism his nerves and all his energy. How many pages had he covered, pages which now lay with the dust of years upon them! How much ink he had used, and he often said to what little purpose to himself!

Denis Ramel now passed many long hours at his window, looking out at the green leaves on the trees before him, or at the high walls of a building, or at the end of a tricolored flag floating from the roof of a Normal School which he liked to look at. Then from the right came sounds of the perpetual activity of the Saint Lazare station—constant columns of smoke ascended to the sky, and the locomotives whistled all day long.

"Smoke against smoke!" thought Ramel, with his pipe in his mouth. "It is about as much use for a man to fight single handed against stupidity, as it would be for him to try and make as much smoke as all these locomotives."

Ramel was delighted to see Vaudrey, whom the woman of the house introduced as "Monsieur Vaudrey." Ramel placed a chair for him, and asked him what he had come to say to a journalist of an epoch before the flood.

What did Vaudrey wish to say? Why had he come? He really had no other motive than a wish to see his friend, and induce him to accept some benefit at his hands. "Would he not consent to accept the Censorship of the Press?"

"By no means," answered Ramel, "I prefer to let the press alone. But do you know," added the old Journalist "that you, Vaudrey, are positively the only one of my friends in power who has ever remembered me."

"You cannot pay me a greater compliment than to tell me this, my dear Ramel, for I really know nothing in the world more thoroughly contemptible than ingratitude. In my opinion, the recollection of what we owe the people is an imperative duty."

"But there are hundreds of persons who do not know how the word gratitude is spelled. It would be a good thing, I admit, if some of these people could be sent to school again and required to learn the word by heart."

Sulpice was accustomed to his friend's manner of talking, and knew that his severity was all on the surface.

"I pity the majority of people," continued the old man. "I pity them, but I have no time to hate them, one cannot do everything, you know!"

The Minister was delighted to find himself face to face with this man who reminded him of coins no longer in circulation, but which, more valuable for that very reason, have become medals. With him he could say what he pleased without fear of betrayal. He wanted to keep him close at his side, he needed his moral support. He persisted, but Ramel was not to be moved.

"But you promised me, if I were in need of you."

"Yes; but I am too old."

"Not to give me advice, surely."

"I do not need to give you my address since you know it, and are here, nor to tell you that you may count on me since you know me."

Vaudrey saw that it was useless to persist. He had not to deal with a misanthrope, or a man who had a contempt for the world, but with a sage. He felt that this old man whom he had found sitting by the window and smoking, with his velvet cap on his head, was always ready to serve him.

"You are happy, Ramel?" asked Sulpice, in some little astonishment.

"Perfectly happy."

"You ask for nothing in this world?"

"Nothing at all. I simply wait philosophically until the time comes for the monument."

He smiled, seeing that Vaudrey did not understand this phrase which was one he was in the habit of using.

"The monument is over there," he said, "Villa Montmartre! Oh! don't think I am tired of life. It is very pleasant sometimes. But the day will come when you will find me here in my arm-chair, or on my bed after a long illness, which I should not like at all, for slowness in an affair of this kind is repugnant to my taste, and you will read a short paragraph in one or two journals announcing that the funeral of Monsieur Denis Ramel—a former editor of several democratic journals, a man of celebrity in his day, but who has been well-nigh forgotten since—will take place in such a place at such an hour. Very few people will pay any attention to this notice or assist at the funeral, but I hope you will be one of that few, unless there should be an important session at the Chamber."

Old Ramel, caressing his white moustache with his long, thin fingers, uttered these last words with a faint inflexion of sarcasm in his voice. He was conscious of this, and extended his hand to Sulpice.

"Forgive me, I should not have said that. I never doubted you! You have one great fault which, however, is a fatal one. In a world made up of busy men, of politicians who are most of them commonplace and selfish to the last degree, you have retained your illusions and your artistic tastes. I shall always be

glad to advise you, my dear Minister—you whom I once called my dear child, and if the suggestions of a recluse like myself can be of any use to you, you are welcome to them."

"Ah!" cried Sulpice, "if you only knew the comfort it is to me to have a man speak, of whose fidelity I am certain! His very voice has a different ring to it!"

And from this Vaudrey naturally enough began to speak of his recent annoyances. The mere repetition of the Warcolier episode, of the man who had become Assistant Secretary of State under a Republican Ministry after having played in charades at Compiègne, threw him into a new fit of passion.

Ramel laughed.

"Nonsense!" he replied, "you will see this same thing occur over and over again. But Governments always do most for their enemies, particularly when these adversaries feign to be disarmed. As to friends, favors would be wasted on them; they are yours already!"

"But does not this irritate you, Republican as you are?"

"Not much! I have grown gray in harness, and such things do not disturb me in the least. I do not say that my dream, my ideal—to use a word not much in vogue—is precisely what I see around me, but I am persuaded that Progress is making rapid strides and the cause of Liberty is doing as much, notwithstanding a great deal of stupid nonsense that is talked.

I avow to you, however, that I often feel the odd sensation of a man who finds after the lapse of years a woman whom he adored when he was twenty, on the arm of a person whom he does not especially respect."

Ramel lighted his pipe, and half buried in the blue smoke that floated around his head, he talked on and on, happy in the thought that he could speak with the utmost freedom to this man and show him the secrets of his heart. He gave advice to this man whom he had once compared to a piece of porcelain, which the least jar would shatter.

"Ah!" said he, at last, "you must by all means remember, Vaudrey, that it is expedient for you to appear in the Tribune much more brutal and obstinate than Nature made you. In these days, when the word sympathetic is almost an insult, it is wise to be a little of a boor."

"I shall never be different from what I am;" answered Sulpice, with a smile.

"So much the worse! The delicate and the modest are dupes. Turkeys think that by swelling their necks and strutting they can arrive at the dignity of peacocks. Believe me, my dear fellow, it is dangerous even in the rank which you have reached to appear to have too much taste. Such men remain in the corner, while the boaster and wrangler carries off the honors. Do you not remember that more moths are attracted by the light of a farthing candle than by the gleam of a diamond of the first water!"

"I am ready to give you," continued Ramel, "my

whole stock of experience—do what you will with it, but of all things look out for *le donne!*"

"You mean women, I suppose?" asked the Minister, with a start.

"Precisely! Around Ministers there is always a flying squadron of women who are, perhaps, more clothed but not less dangerous than the famous flying squadron of the Medici. Women, who complain of having no political rights, but who in reality direct each act of the Ministers. Please understand that when I speak of women I make no allusion to your admirable wife," said Ramel, with delicate respect.

"And now," he continued, "as we are discussing this subject, I am going to tell you what strikes me most forcibly in the present situation. The peculiarity of the hour, my dear Vaudrey, is the rapidity with which men are worn out and laid on the shelf. It seems to me that the men of the day are incapable of long resistance. This is probably the reason that public business is always found, it matters not which party prompts, in the hands of people who are ill fitted for their position. I do not mean you, who, intellectually speaking, are an exception. But men are no longer dipped in the Styx or perhaps they show their heels too readily. The result is that for the last few years this extraordinary phenomenon has been produced. While the provincial towns are a prey to Parisian speculators, who destroy them and demolish their picturesque beauty to build Boulevards and Hôtels, Paris, on the contrary, is directed and gov-

erned by provincials who provincialize it, as much as Parisian companies, Parisianize the province. Our provincials, astonished to find themselves among the Parisian government, lose their heads a little, take the bit between their teeth and precipitate themselves with the most immoderate appetites on certain dainties. They behave like children eager to be fed —gentlemen who have grown old in the provinces, satisfied with the affection of some daughter, or youthful Bourgeois, studying medicine or law, are all eager to know that unknowable creature, woman. And woman, what does she do to their Excellences? She takes away all their power of resistance, and their energy—they become as nothing in her hands."

The Minister listened with great uneasiness to these truths uttered by the old Journalist without exasperation and without anger.

Yes, Denis the veteran, was right—all these observations Vaudrey had himself made at different times, and it was to finish with these abuses and follies—to put an end to this provincialism—that he had come into power, and he certainly should make every effort.

He thanked Ramel with warmth. "This visit," he said, "should not be the last; he should often return to this Rue Boursault, where he knew a true friend was always waiting for him."

"And you are right," answered Denis, "no where is there any one who will love you more profoundly or will take the trouble to tell you plainer truths. The walls of your residence, Vaudrey, are too thick—one

hears nothing when within them, neither the roar of the carriages nor the cries in the streets. I passed a few days in a Palace once, it was in '48—at the Tuileries. I was one of the National Guard; after two hours had elasped I heard not one sound. The carpets and the curtains as well as the walls drown all sounds, and I honestly believe that I should not have heard even the reports of cannon. This being the case, why should I suppose that Truth should do more? People don't like to shout truths too loudly, you know—it frightens every one!"

"I assure you," answered Sulpice, "that I shall hear and seek to hear everything. And since I have the power—"

Ramel shook his head.

"Power? Ah! you will see if one ever absorbs power except in homœopathic doses. You will have all the Bureaus against you, these Bureaus have governed this country ever since they existed, and you will be tripped up by more than one Warcolier, I fear."

"Yes—if I have not the ability to prevent it!" answered Vaudrey, proudly.

"You cannot prevent it, my poor friend!" said the veteran, sadly.

Vaudrey took up his hat, and Ramel said to him, as with tender familiarity he passed his arm through his to conduct him to the door:

"Power is like a kite—it flies high, but there is always some rascal who holds the string!"

"Come, now," Vaudrey exclaimed, "you are a pessimist."

"I admit that Schopenhauer is not always disagreeable to me!"

They separated then, after a cordial grasp of the hand, and Denis Ramel went back to his pipe and his seat in the corner of the window, while the Minister carried away with him a troubled impression of this interview.

He felt the need of digesting it, so to speak, and he determined not to return at once to those bleak rooms in the Ministerial residence.

"To the Bois! Drive round the Lake!" he said to the coachman, as he entered the coupé.

The air was as soft as on an afternoon of May. Vaudrey dropped the window of his carriage to drink it at his ease. The outer Boulevard was full of pedestrians, and looked like a Sunday afternoon. Several aged persons were seated on the benches, basking in the sun.

Sulpice looked out of the window, his head full of Ramel's warnings. He had called the old man a pessimist, but in his heart admitted that he was a philosopher, and spoke the truth. But why had Ramel spoken to him that day, of all others, and for the first time, of women?

He felt, as he thus drove toward the Bois, a delicious sensation of isolation. He had begun to recover his equilibrium somewhat. In this long avenue, where at this hour scarcely a human being passed, he drew a

long breath of relief. He was not here obliged to listen to any one, or even to return a bow.

How easy it would be to enjoy life and to be happy, in this most fascinating Paris. He had seen artisans in blouses asleep just now at the base of the Arc de Triomphe, and involuntarily compared them to Andalusian mendicants on the steps of the Alhambra. They were without cares. He envied them.

The Bois was almost deserted. Vaudrey saw an occasional distant form among the trees, an English governess with a group of children around her, the green uniform of a Forest Guard, or the blue blouse of the workman trimming the trees.

The coachman drove more slowly, and Sulpice, a little intoxicated by this first breath of spring, opened all the windows and drank in the delicious air, saying to himself that in Paris, comfort and peace was within reach of all.

"Why is the Bois so deserted?" he asked himself, and at the same time felt provoked that he had not brought Adrienne. She would have enjoyed this sweet day, this forerunner of spring. She was not exacting; very small pleasures delighted her. She was a much better woman than he was man, but he made excuses for himself, saying that he should not have been able to talk freely to Ramel.

Then, too, he would have been compelled to talk with Adrienne, and that would have destroyed the flavor of the present hour, imparted by the sense of solitude as well as by the balmy freshness of the air.

The coachman turned to the left, to make the circuit of the Lake, which Vaudrey saw before him, as blue as the sky. On it were two or three row-boats, gliding over its surface without a sound.

He saw that a carriage stood by the side of the road. It was a fiacre, and the coachman, with his head hanging over his right shoulder, slept tranquilly in the sunshine, the brim of his hat pulled down over his eyes.

This was the only carriage to be seen, and a few steps from it, on the shore of the Lake, stood a woman, surrounded by a crowd of ducks, that were eagerly snatching, with noisy vehemence, the crumbs of brown bread she was throwing down to them. Two white swans floating on the water looked on with a dignified air.

As soon as Sulpice saw this figure, his heart beat to suffocation, and he felt that he trembled from head to foot.

He could not be mistaken—he recognized her at once. It was Mademoiselle Kayser, without doubt.

Marianne? Marianne on the shores of this Lake at an hour when there was no one in the Bois? Vaudrey did not believe in superstitions, nor in predestinations. He, nevertheless, thought this accident a most extraordinary one. There is a certain fantastic fate in life which takes us sometimes directly to the path of which we have been dreaming. He had noticed this very often.

He left his carriage and walked down the little path under the trees to the shore of the Lake.

It was she; he would certainly have found Mademoiselle Kayser, sooner or later, but it was very strange that this day, when for the first time in his life he had taken it into his head to take a solitary drive to the Lake, that he should have found Mademoiselle Kayser there.

He said to himself that Marianne would be greatly surprised, and he kept his eyes on her as he approached.

She was standing erect on the tiny wharf thrown out from the bank. Over her black dress she had thrown a satin mantle, embroidered with jet, which glittered in the sun. A black plume was lifted by the wind, and floated around her hat where other shorter ones of old gold were twisted closely about the brim. Vaudrey took in every detail of this living Parisian statue. A demi veil was tied closely over her face and around her throat. Between the lace ruche which trimmed her mantle, there was a gleam of more old gold, so that the woman's face seemed set in a frame of that color; the sunlight fell on her rich hair, and she was more exquisite in the eyes of Sulpice even than in her ball toilette.

She turned suddenly when she heard his steps on the gravelled path. Under the black veil with its velvet spots, which lay on her face like patches, Vaudrey first remarked Marianne's excessive pallor, and then the joy that suddenly flashed into her eyes. A faint color also stole to Marianne's cheeks.

"You here!" she said. "You, the Minister?"

Her first exclamation was a cry of surprise—her concluding words were ceremonious and polite.

Vaudrey replied by some platitude or another. He said he was weary, the day and the sun inviting. But she?

"Oh! I hardly know why I am here. Ask my coachman. He took me wherever he chose."

She spoke in a quick, irritated tone, under which he divined a disappointment or a sorrow.

She mechanically continued to scatter around her the crumbs of bread which were eagerly snatched by the many colored ducks, white or gray, black and striped like tulips, marbled like Cordova leather, with throats whose iris tints of green and blue reminded one of Venetian glass. These creatures all crowded around Marianne's feet, tumbling over each other and choking themselves with the bits of bread which a man near by had sold to Marianne.

"Ah!" she said, "I certainly did not anticipate the honor of seeing you here, to-day."

"The honor?" answered Vaudrey. "I should say the happiness."

She looked him frankly in the face.

"The word happiness is to-day incomprehensible to me. I have just come from the Hôtel Continental, where I hoped to see—"

"Who, then?"

"No one—nothing!"

"If it were nothing why should you frown in that way?"

"Well, then, I hoped to see a friend, one whom I had just found again and who has disappeared. After

all, what does it matter? There is a fatality in these matters—*Che sara, sara!* In short, I am here, and feeding these ducks—Heaven knows why, I detest the creatures. The government does not give them enough to eat, Monsieur Le Minstre. I feel it is my duty to lay that complaint before you. They are literally famished. Well! what is it?" she said to one creature who, more bold than the others, pecked her skirt to call her attention and demand more food.

"This one is not diffident, certainly," she said, with a nervous laugh, as she threw him a bit of bread so large that he was nearly strangled.

"Do you know that these ducks are singularly like human beings, Monsieur Le Ministre? There are some among them who have not caught one crumb since I came here, and others who will certainly die of indigestion. What do you call that? Bad political Economy, I should say."

"Upon my word!" answered Vaudrey, "you are a Philosopher."

"So far as this goes, I am," she replied, pointing to the ducks who were flocking toward her from all sides, with eager cries. "You know when one is out of spirits one is apt to philosophize."

"And you are out of spirits?" asked Sulpice in a voice that was not quite steady.

She scattered the last crumb of her bread before she replied, rubbed her gloved hands with her handkerchief, and then turning to the Minister she said with a smile that made him shiver from head to foot. "Yes,

very much so; black butterflies or blue devils, you can take your choice."

He thought of her as he had seen her the previous evening with her shining arms and shoulders emerging from her laces, and thought her even more charming as she stood now, wrapped in her mantle and with her vail drawn over her face. The singular unexpectedness of their meeting gave to their conversation a somewhat mysterious element that added to its charm.

Ah! how he rejoiced that a whim had led him to the Bois. It seemed to him that he had come there to see her, and that a certain magnetism had drawn there these two beings who the day before had never met, and who had never exchanged a word save the ordinary civilities of society, and who now under the trees and in this flood of sunshine and this fresh winter air, were drawn together by some positive sympathy.

"Do you know of what I was thinking?" she asked with a laugh, "when I was throwing this brown bread to the ducks? It looked like an innocent amusement, did it not? Well! I was saying to myself that if one only dared to take a quick leap into that water — and it looks very tempting — that it would put an end to everything."

Vaudrey did not reply. He was thunderstruck.

"Oh! you need not be concerned, the mania was only a momentary one. Then, too, I can swim, better even than those swans. There is no danger!"

He took her hands and experienced a singular sensation as his fingers rested on her quivering pulse.

"You have fever," he said.

"I dare say," was her indifferent reply.

Her voice was hard.

"The departure of this — this friend — has made you suffer?"

"Suffer? No. But it has annoyed and disappointed me. When one has built a house of cards in one's life. But I am foolish. When that falls, build another, that is all." She said this with evident bitterness.

She disengaged herself from Vaudrey's hands, and slowly moved toward her carriage where her coachman awaited her with closed eyes and open mouth.

"Where are you going when you leave the Bois?" asked Vaudrey.

"I? I have no idea."

He started.

"You need have no fear of a tragedy," she said. "I wish to live, and I suppose I shall go home."

"Home?"

"Or to my uncle's. But really, Monsieur Le Ministre," she said, "you are usurping the functions of your Prefect of Police. I know him, and I assure you he never asks as many questions as your Excellency."

"It may be that he is less interested in you," Vaudrey replied.

"Pshaw!" said Marianne.

She had reached her fiâcre by this time, and looked at the coachman for a moment.

"Don't you think it would be a pity to wake him?"

she said. "Shall we take a short walk, Monsieur Le Ministre?"

Vaudrey turned a little pale at this question, which he conceived to be a promise.

Marianne's gray eyes rested on his.

Followed by the Minister's coupé, they went slowly down the wide path that runs along the side of the lake, where the swans were floating and beating the water into light foam with their outspread wings. The lake reflected the blue of the sky. The grass was brown and looked in some places like worn velvet.

Marianne looked around at the gray rocks washed clean by winter storm, at the varnished leaves of the ivy, and at the leafless trees, while Vaudrey kept his eyes fixed on her. There were goats browsing as in a forest, and in the distance was a pool around which dry grass, the color of ripe wheat, gave to the sad landscape a tone of mystery.

"One would think we were at the end of the world!" said Sulpice, in a low voice.

A little laugh from Marianne was her reply, as she pointed to an inscription upon a post.

"Road to the Croix-Catelan!" she said; "your end of the world is certainly very Parisian!"

"And yet," he replied, "see how lonely it is here!"

She seemed to divine his thoughts, for she turned into a narrow path, where her high heels made a mark in the soft earth and the shadows of the leafless branches played over her black dress. Vaudrey followed, for the path was too narrow for them to walk side by side.

He felt that it was a joy to live, and this strange woman had just spoken of dying.

The path widened, and he approached her side and said, almost in her little rosy ear:

"Is it possible to think of anything to-day except the new-born breath of Spring? Can it be true, Marianne, that you wished to die?"

He did not notice that he had called her by her first name.

It seemed to him that he had known her for years. He forgot all except the face before him.

"Yes," she replied, "I am weary of life at times. But when one becomes most desperate, one often—"

She checked herself.

"Well?" he said, waiting for her to finish her sentence.

"No, nothing—"

She laughed and looked down to the end of the path that led into a wide avenue down to the shores of the Lake, the blue line of which they could distinguish.

"Blue on blue!" she said, as she pointed to the sky and the water. "You reproach me for not liking blue. Look there, it is a perfect bath of azure, Monsieur Le Ministre."

Vaudrey asked himself, if she were laughing at him. Why did she address him by his title which, at such a moment, sounded to him so unreal?

"We had best go to my carriage now," she said, with her peculiar smile which made him always feel that he

must kiss her then and there. "It is a pity," she added, slowly.

These last words pleased Vaudrey. He repeated them in a questioning tone.

"Yes," she said, "I mean what I say, for this little walk has changed the current of my thoughts."

His coupé had kept near them, and its shadow now fell on the path.

"Do you come to the Bois often?" asked the Minister.

"No. Why?"

"Because I should come again in that case," he answered, in a steady tone.

"Would you really take that trouble?" asked Marianne, with a glance that was a caress.

"In such weather as this," she said, carelessly, "it is quite possible that I may revisit this path. Ah! what is that?" she added turning round.

A dry, thorny twig had caught on her satin skirt, and she stooped to shake it off.

"Wait a moment," said Sulpice, trying to set his foot on the twig.

"No; you will tear it if you do that, it is too firmly imbedded in the plaits."

He stooped and removed the stick, while Marianne, half bending, looked down on this man, a Minister, almost kneeling before her in the shadow of the wood.

He threw the twig away.

"It is all right, now!" he said.

"Many thanks."

And, as he rose, he felt on his face Marianne's fresh breath, and perceived the faint odor of new mown hay which always hung about her.

He became very pale and looked at her so intently, that she colored—perhaps with pleasure—but neither spoke again, he, possibly, because he feared to say too much.

As she entered her carriage, Sulpice summoned all his courage, and murmured:

"I must see you again, Marianne."

"And why?" she asked, with her eyes fixed on his.

"Where can I see you?" he asked, without replying to her question.

"I do not know. In my home— Wait!" she added, "and I will write to you."

"You promise me."

"I give you my word. I will address it to the Ministerial Residence, and put 'personal' in the corner."

"Ah! how good you are!" he cried, hardly knowing what he said. The coachman touched his whip to the horses, and the fiâcre rolled away.

It seemed to Vaudrey that he saw a pale, veiled face at the window at the back of the carriage.

The fiâcre disappeared.

"Home," said the Minister, as he entered his coupé. He drove through the Avenue of the Bois de Boulogne, and met all the fashionable equipages on their way to the Lake. Old ladies, in deep mourning, accompanied by a pale Sister, or an old man, with a scarlet decoration on his breast, lay back in calèches

covered with rugs. Pretty faces appeared in the open windows of coupés, side by side with the black muzzles of well combed dogs. Vaudrey hoped to catch another glimpse of Marianne, but she had vanished.

He thought only of her, while the coupé descended the Avenue des Champs Elysées now gay and crowded. The coachman turned into a cross street, and thence through a large open gateway, between two columns, into an avenue leading up to a huge Hôtel, all white and roofed with slate, now bright with the rays of the setting sun. A soldier in red pantaloons, with a shako drawn well down over his brow, mounted guard in front of a sentry box painted brown. Over the gate a tri-color flag, new as was the Minister, floated out in the sunshine as if to greet him.

Over the door of the Ministerial Residence were two lines of gas lanterns, intended to be lighted on Reception evenings.

Two lacqueys rushed out, as soon as the carriage was heard, to open the door for the Minister.

"Farewell, Marianne!" said Sulpice to himself, as he crossed the threshold of this vast Hôtel which was as cold as a tomb.

CHAPTER VIII.

CLAIRE DUJARRIER.

MARIANNE KAYSER was very superstitious. She had always rebounded, as she herself said, like an elastic ball, at the very moment when she fell to the ground more than half conquered.

Fate had given her some reason for this superstition. And now, when she was tired of life and disgusted with everthing and everybody, Monsieur de Rosas had arrived in Paris.

The Duc had not been difficult to please, and Marianne left Sabine's boudoir with a feeling of triumph. She had regained all her natural buoyancy, and was again "in the vein." Early the next day she should see Rosas. She dreamed all night of him. He poured a shower of gold on her dull life. She awoke in the best of spirits.

Her uncle noticed the change on her face.

"You are as beautiful as a Corregio!" Then, after a minute's pause, he added, "Corregio was a good painter, but he was too voluptuous. You might sit for me as a Saint Cecelia. With a *nimbus* you would be admirable!"

"I will sit for your Saint by and by. I have no time now!"

Kayser did not ask his niece why she had no time. He did not ask her what she was doing or where she went. She was perfectly free to go and come as she pleased. Liberty was one of the Parisians' pet ideas.

Marianne breakfasted quickly, and at an early hour. Then making a careful toilette before her mirror she went out and summoning a fiâcre, drove to the Hôtel Continental. She asked for the Duc de Rosas as haughtily as if the Duc belonged to her.

Then suddenly she became very pale when the Duc's departure was announced.

"Gone! Where had he gone? It was impossible!"

It was necessary to tell her over and over again at the office of the Hôtel just what had happened. The Duc had that morning ordered a coupé and driven to the Calais train. He had, to be sure, left his luggage, but had said that he might telegraph them to send it to England.

Marianne listened in utter stupefaction. Her face under her black veil was absolutely ghastly.

"Had Monsieur de Rosas received any telegram?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Ah!" she said. In this statement she found a ray of comfort, for something serious and important might have happened. And yet, to go without a word of notice to her, after an evening like the last, was a source of unbounded astonishment to this woman who had thought herself so sure of José.

"He is afraid of me! I will wager my life that he is afraid! He loves me and distrusts himself, and therefore departed!"

She laughed nervously as she re-entered her carriage.

"This seems to be my destiny. That idiot Guy departed for Italy, and Rosas goes to England. Steam was invented that men might fly from the women they deem dangerous! I did not follow Lissac! Suppose I follow the Duc!"

She shrugged her shoulders and twisted her handkerchief between her fingers, undecided, while the coachman waited to know where the lady wanted to go.

Marianne felt that she was beaten. She was like a gamester who had played his last card. Evidently Rosas would not show more clearly the impression she had made upon him; she measured his love by his fear —but of what value was that love, if the Duc ran away? Where could she find him? Where could she look for him? Where could she write to him? He might take passage for Japan or Australia as soon as he reached Dover. The movements of a man like that could not be counted on.

"Upon my word!" murmured Marianne, half laughing at her own defeat, "I do not know what to do!"

"Well, Madame?" asked the coachman, phlegmatically.

"Go where you choose! To the Bois."

"Very good, Madame."

He pulled out his huge aluminum watch and said, coldly, "It wanted a quarter to twelve when I took Madame."

"Very well—to the Bois!"

The movement, the crowd, the sun on the fountains

and the stones of La Place de la Concorde, occupied Marianne's mind, while at the same time it added to her agitation. All the gayety of this spring-like day seemed to her a bitter sarcasm. She was in precisely the same mood as when she had gone to Guy's rooms and told him how weary she was of life. Since then she had built many hopes and seen them crumble to ashes!

"And now I must begin again! I must lead the weary, repulsive life of a woman who is constantly harassed for money to buy the bread she must eat. It is too sad. But what am I to do?"

Her eyes were fixed on vacancy as she asked herself this question, but she could find no solution.

She was in a rage against Rosas. She would have liked to tear him to pieces as she had the handkerchief in her hand. Ah! if she should ever see him again after his flight—

But perhaps it was not a flight. The Duc might write, he might reappear at any moment.

"No," said Marianne, who instinctively grasped the truth. "He is afraid of me, that is the only reason why he has fled. It is really enough to make a woman lose all patience!" Yesterday, when she left Rosas she believed that she should say farewell to the miserable Bohemia in which she existed. To-day she was deeper in the mud than ever. She was weary of it all.

"If I only had the courage," she said to herself, as she looked at the great blue Lake. But this would

have been a great folly. Women do not kill themselves at her age and with her beauty. She purchased some bread which she threw to the ducks because she wished to distract her thoughts. Then it was that Sulpice appeared.

"It is clear," she said to herself, as she parted from him, "that people who allow themselves to lose all hope and become desperate, are idiots!"

It seemed, indeed, that chance had thrown Vaudrey at her feet instead of Rosas, in the same way that she had thrown food to the ducks.

A Minister! Yes, this young man who had greeted her with smiles on the shore of the Lake was indeed a Minister and a power in the land, and, as Marianne was heartily weary of love and now pursued a reality almost as difficult to find—riches—Sulpice was by no means to be disdained.

"I might go further and fare worse," thought Marianne, quoting a homely adage as she entered her room.

She did not hesitate long. She had arrived at an age when it was necessary to come to a decision quickly, each time that life, with its rough spurs, presented some new problem.

She had promised Vaudrey to write to him, and she would keep her word. She was eager to avenge herself on Rosas, and felt sure that he would suffer did he know that Sulpice loved her.

Had she found the Duc waiting for her when she went in, her excitement was so great that she was quite capable of hissing into his face an avowal which

was a falsehood: "You are here, are you? Well, you are too late—I love Monsieur Vaudrey."

But there was no one waiting for her at her uncle's but poverty and cold. The idea had come to her of asking Vaudrey to come to see her there. But to receive him in the miserable setting of that dismal atélier—among those shabby tapestries and second-rate pictures and yellow plaster casts—were to avow all the poverty and needs of her miserable existence. She knew only too well that such avowals chilled a man's passion.

She looked about her uncle's atélier with almost hatred.

She appreciated its hideousness and its dirt. No, she could never ask Vaudrey to take a seat on that divan covered with tumbled pamphlets and stale ends of cigars, and from whence clouds of dust arose at the smallest movement.

"What are you looking at?" asked Kayser, following Marianne's eyes. "You seem to be taking an inventory."

"Precisely; and I have come to the conclusion that if you were to sell these things at the Hôtel Dronot they would not bring you much."

"Elevated and moral creations do not sell in times like these," said the old man, gravely. "I could make money enough did I choose to paint obscene pictures!"

Marianne shrugged her shoulders and went out, coughing involuntarily as she went. Old Kayser lived in a constant atmosphere of nicotine.

"I am lost," she said to herself, "if Vaudrey comes here."

She knew that a caprice like his needed luxury, intoxicating perfumes, and rustling silks. Vaudrey would recoil before this Bohemian atélier. The famous nimbus of which Kayser had spoken always existed in his studio, and was created by tobacco smoke. Then what should she do? Receive him in that room of which no one but herself knew the secret, where she went to enjoy her solitary dreams? Should she take this man to this distant quarter of Paris and let him see the *débris* of her former luxury? Would not this be as pitiful and repelling a sight as the poverty of the atélier? It would be only a way of telling Vaudrey that in a *liason* with him she sought only the means of leaving her prison. She felt that this man, who was now carried away by his illusions, and who evidently believed her to be a woman who might give, but not sell herself, would recoil before the reality when he found himself face to face with an adventuress. "Illusion is everything! Men must have illusions, they are so stupid!" she murmured.

But how was she to deceive Vaudrey in regard to her position? How was she to veil her poverty, and be taken for what she was not? With Rosas it would have been easy. She would have received him in her poverty. He would have loved her in spite of it, but it was necessary to dazzle Vaudrey.

"They are equally simple," said Marianne to herself, "but one thirsts for virtue, the other for vice!"

Where should she turn? She might borrow, but from whom? From Guy? She dared not, even supposing Lissac were rich, which she knew he was not. But she was anxious to preserve appearances in Guy's eyes. She had never forgiven his flight to Italy, she should never forget it; she should ask nothing of Guy —no, never!"

Then, of whom? She was once more in the terrible situation of those who, in great need of money, see not one human being in the great crowd who will extend a helping hand. Her heart swelled with rage and hatred. She would have done anything, sold herself to any one, to obtain the money she needed at once.

Suddenly she remembered an old woman who, it was said, had once been beautiful, and was still clever, and was believed to be rich. This woman had formerly been of service to Marianne, who now rarely thought of her except on the few occasions when they chanced to meet. Claire Dujarrier, concealing her white hair under gold powder as yellow as sawdust, had said to her:

"When you need advice or assistance remember my address—Rue La Fontaine, at Auteuil."

Marianne had thanked and forgotten her. It was not until this present need that the name and face of Claire Dujarrier came to her mind. Claire Dujarrier had been a *danseuse*. Her black eyes, her diamonds and luxury, her *amours* and her follies, had been for some time the talk of Paris. Then she retired to a

small Hôtel, and was in constant fear of being assassinated. She built iron safes for her jewels in the wall, and trembled before some young lover who ruled her for the time being.

"Claire Dujarrier! She is the very person! And why not?" said Marianne to herself.

It was Guy de Lissac who had once presented her to the former *danseuse*. It was said he had once been her lover. They had quarreled after some one had repeated a remark made by Guy at the Club.

"When I see her I am always a little agitated. She recalls my youth! But not her own, alas!"

Claire was rich but avaricious. Marianne instinctively felt, however, that here she would gain the assistance she required.

"I can pay all the money back, I only ask her to lend it to me for a time. She knows that it is here." And Kayser's niece struck her breast with her hand as she stood looking at herself in the mirror. Early the next morning she went to call on the former dancer.

Claire Dujarrier lived in la Rue Fontaine, at Auteuil, which town is a combination of the suburbs of a city and of a provincial faubourg, with its summer villas, its little châlets shut up in dreary gardens half filled with dead leaves, its boarding schools and boarding houses; with its one long village street where the grocer and butcher, the baker and druggist all elbow each other.

Marianne looked about her in search of Claire's little Hôtel. She had been here before, but had forgotten it.

A policeman was walking sadly on one side of the street, as if to keep up the illusion of a town, while on the other side a gardener trailed along in wooden sabots as if to suggest the village.

It was nevertheless here, that the woman once so celebrated, who had aroused a perfect tempest of bravos when at the opera she danced by Cerito's side, had buried herself. A fiâcre rolling toward the villa Montmorency was an event, and she amused herself looking through close shut blinds at the smoke rolling from the chimney of some great manufactory.

Marianne rang several times at the gate of the Hôtel. The bell wires seemed rusty. At last an astonished looking old woman opened the door.

She showed Marianne into the salon where Claire Dujarrier sat alone with a terrier dog on her knees eating cakes.

The dog wanted to leap at Marianne's skirts when Claire took her in her arms.

"My dear child! How glad I am to see you. By what happy chance have you come here to-day?"

Marianne looked at Claire. The *danseuse* was still very handsome, although too much rouged. Her eyes too, were a little swollen, and her cheeks withered, but she so thoroughly understood the secrets of the toilette that she would never look really old. Her figure, though too short, was still handsome.

She listened attentively while Marianne told her story. Smiled and frowned from time to time, and finally told the child that she was in luck.

"For I know the very thing for you. Vanda — you remember Vanda?"

"No, madame."

"But you must. She is the woman that treacherous Guy used to laugh at so much."

"I do not remember—"

"Well! never mind. Vanda went to Russia a month ago. She will be there all winter, next summer and a part of the following winter. Her General demands it. He is appointed to watch the Nihilists. She wishes, therefore, to let her Hôtel in la Rue Prony. It is a charming Hôtel, in admirable style. You are in luck; it is not dear, either."

"Too dear for me, for a woman who has not a sou!"

"Little simpleton! You have yourself!" said Claire Dujarrier. "And you have me. I have always had a great liking for you. I will lend you the money you need, and you will give me your notes which your Minister—upon my word you fly high my child, which His Excellency will endorse. Vanda will not be exacting about the rent. If her Hôtel is well taken care of she will wait for the money; but if any difficulty should arise then I will put you through. But my dear," and the old woman dropped her voice, "say nothing to Adolphe."

"Adolphe?"

"Yes, my husband. You do not know him?"

She took from the table a photograph, in a sky-blue velvet frame, and Marianne had the pleasure of seeing a big fellow with huge hands, a flat face and a bristling

moustache. He was leaning on a cane, and standing against the usual back ground of a garden and Medici vases.

"Handsome fellow, is he not? He is young and loves me, and I — I adore him."

Claire Dujarrier's eyes looked like burning coals. She pressed the photograph to her painted lips and laid it carefully on the table.

Marianne almost pitied this half senile love. But she had no time to waste on any one but herself. She was radiant with joy. It seemed to her as if through a breach in a black wall a future full of sunshine had just been shown to her. It was a perfect inspiration to have thought of this woman.

She was ready to sign anything and made no objection to the rate of interest demanded. She cared little for that; the opening wedge was all she needed.

"You are right," said the old *danseuse*, "the nest is ready for the birds. Your Minister — I don't ask his name, you see, for I shall soon know it from the notes — would treat you like a grisette were he to find you at your uncle's. You will tell me all about it by-and-by. I shall write to Vanda that her Hôtel is let and well let. Now kiss me, my dear, and run. Adolphe is coming, and he does not like new faces — yours is too pretty, besides," she said in a strange tone.

She sent Marianne away with her old servant as if afraid her husband's eyes should rest on her beauty.

"I do not think though, that I shall trouble her

very much in that direction!" thought Marianne, as she drove rapidly away from la Rue Fontaine.

Night was falling over the gray streets. A little blue mist was rising over the river. Paris was visible in the distance. She half closed her eyes, and while some voice repeated in her ears the names Rosas, Vaudrey, la Rue Prony, Vanda, she saw herself lying back in a low chair, looking down at a man kneeling at her feet,—a Minister, while in the distance another man, who looked like Rosas, was slowly disappearing.

"It had to be one or the other," said this superstitious creature; "the Duc or the Minister. I had no choice in the matter!"

And looking into the window pane, where her pale face was dimly shadowed, she kissed her hand to herself, and cried, gayly:

"How are you, Vanda? Mademoiselle Vanda, I salute you!"

LIBRARY.

CHAPTER IX.

VANDA'S HOTEL.

LA PLAINE MONCEAU is a most wonderful part of Paris. It is a town by itself, born in a night. All at once this corner burst into flower; the shoemakers' stalls, wine shops and corner groceries disappeared, and buildings of the most eccentric style of architecture took their place. A Château looked down on an English cottage, a Louis XIII. Hôtel elbowed a Flemish mansion. It was a city within a city. An enormous American Hôtel threw its shadows over an Italian loggia. Parisians and Yankees were side by side. The Château de Blois sheltered a chocolate stall, and the artist's studio was transformed into the salon of a suddenly enriched speculator.

Vanda's little Hôtel—"one of our pretty fugitives," as the newspapers had it sometimes—was very pretty outside, even if a little severe in its style, while within it was filled to overflowing with elegant trifles. It passed for being the prettiest mansion in la Rue de Prony. On its front was a dreary-looking placard, having upon it the words, "To be Let, Furnished." Its closed blinds gave it the melancholy aspect of a deserted boudoir. The silence was particularly strange, as a great deal of noise had always been heard in the

neighborhood coming from out its windows—a gay waltz, a song, bars of the last quadrille, laughter, and loud talking. Vanda's horses made a great uproar when they drove at the hour for the Bois through the wide portals, and now for a month this part of la Rue Prony had been wrapped in silence.

It was there that Marianne, playing her last card in a decisive game, entered with haughty head, resolved to break the chains that bound her to a life of poverty.

La Dujarrier had given her substantial aid, relying on the beauty of Mademoiselle Kayser to make good her loans. But when the old *danseuse* saw Marianne again she shook her head, for Marianne looked weary and sad.

Marianne felt for the moment almost as discouraged as Dujarrier. She had reached the most critical moment of her life; it was a game of Baccarat she was playing with Fate. When it came to a close she might be rolling in wealth, with her future so assured that she need no longer dread dying in a hospital, after dragging herself in rags around the streets, or she might be overwhelmed with debts and crushed forever. She had given Dujarrier receipts for every sou advanced, the old woman excusing herself for the precautions she took by saying, distinctly:

"This is the way to hold people. Gratitude is all very well, but receipts are better!"

La Dujarrier had been somewhat surprised at the willingness with which Marianne signed all these papers. The truth was, that the girl was indifferent

to the future. She needed the money now to make her plunge, as she said in her own vivid language, which was a combination of the argot of the street and the elegant phraseology of the salon.

"Pshaw! I know how to swim!"

And she threw aside her anxiety under the assurances of Dujarrier herself, who shrugged her shoulders as she said:

"When a woman like you has her clutch on a man like Vaudrey—a Minister—she is sure of her bread!"

Sulpice Vaudrey was not the man to long resist a woman like Marianne. All the repressed ardor, the plotting of his twenty years, had become the appetites of his fortieth. This Provincial, with his passion for Paris, was, in the presence of Marianne, carried away by the passion born of his new honors.

As soon as she was established in la Rue Prony she redeemed her promise and summoned him to her side. He obeyed this summons with eager curiosity, and left her more than ever disturbed. It seemed to him that he had entered a new world. The feminine luxury of Vanda's Hôtel had intoxicated him.

Marianne looked on in perfect calmness at the ravages made on Sulpice by his mad passion. She studied them and their rapid progress with all the *sang froid* of a physician. She administered the poison of her glances, and saw it gradually circulating through this man's nerves. She intended to become his friend, but she wished to have the air of committing her fault in a sudden and overwhelming gust of passion. With

any other man than Vaudrey she would probably have yielded much sooner. But she treated Vaudrey as she had treated Rosas formerly. As these idealists adored their dreams she would indulge them, and call their affection Platonic. She was quite willing to retain her freedom yet a little longer, without the burthen of those pleasures of which she was weary and which disgusted far more than they intoxicated her.

She said to herself that with Sulpice it was best to seem to love him with her whole soul, as she had done with Rosas. But this time she did not intend to allow Vaudrey to disappear as the Duc had done.

"Rosas would be here now," she said to herself, "had he been really my lover!"

After a minute or two given to regret, she shrugged her shoulders, and added, rapidly:

"Pshaw! what is written is written, as he himself said. If he has escaped me I have the other!"

The "other" became evidently each day more and more carried away by her charms. He came daily to see her; his hired fiacre stood at her door for hours. Very often his Ministerial portfolio reposed within it while he was with Marianne. He was happier when he fancied he had made a small advance in Marianne's affection than when he had conquered new forces in the minority. His ambition perished under the deadly influence of this woman.

At the Ministerial residence when alone with Adrienne, and even during his morning receptions, he was often silent and preoccupied. At these times his thoughts were in la Rue Prony.

With the tender smile which invariably caused Vaudrey's heart to ache with remorse, Adrienne begged him to take a little rest, and not allow his every moment to be thus occupied with politics.

"I assure you that you look ill, you are fatigued. You work too hard."

"Yes—but the work must be done."

"Yes, I know, but is not Monsieur Warcolier there? Does he not help you?"

"Not in the least," answered her husband, in a vexed tone. Public affairs did, indeed, absorb him, and he worked all the harder that he might steal an hour to go stealthily to la Rue Prony. The vacation was near at hand. In a month Vaudrey would be free, but for two or three weeks still the Minister must continue at his post.

He managed, however, to leave his coupé elsewhere and go to the Hôtel Vanda, where Marianne was always ready to receive him. Vaudrey was greatly puzzled by the luxury surrounding this woman, for Ramel had told him of Uncle Kayser's poverty. Kayser, whom he met one morning at Marianne's, said to him that his niece knew what she was about; that she was a very determined person and understood the world. But that was all.

"I took her for a simpleton," the Painter said, on another occasion, "but I was the simpleton, myself. She is a clever woman. I have only one thing to reproach her with."

"And what is that?" asked Vaudrey.

"Can you ask, sir? I mean the taste she has shown in the furniture; it is too loud in its style, it lacks Morality. I do not wish to see a salon hung with pictures of sacred things, but there might be some Moral allegories. I understand only Austerity in Art. I am a Puritan of the brush, and that is why I have attained no eminence in this degenerate age."

And Kayser went home to paint his allegories, while he digested the pâté de foie gras washed down with Kummel, on which he had lunched at his niece's.

Vaudrey looked around at the Japanese hangings and porcelains, at the rugs and screens, at the statues and pictures, at the shelves over the doors crowded with knick-knacks, at the luxurious chairs, and on leaving the Hôtel, where he had uttered only platitudes to Marianne, who received them with the caressing sarcasm of a woman who is ready to give, but will not offer herself, he carried away with him a haunting perfume of new mown hay which followed him every where he went.

He did not trouble himself long as to where Marianne Kayser had procured all these articles which so offended her uncle's Puritanical tastes. In fact, the more inexplicable and mysterious the life of this woman, the more seductive she seemed to him. He felt as if he were himself the hero of a romance. Never in those days when he was an insignificant student, an atom in this Parisian life, and in his dreams, raised his eyes to some fair Patrician or to some pretty woman seen within a dark blue coupé or the red lined

box at the theatre, had he thought of a creature so bewitching. Dreams of power he now at forty thrust aside to extend his feverish hands to the tangible visions of his early manhood.

"Is Ramel right?" he asked himself, "and are all Provincials mad about Paris and Parisians? But what does it matter? Let Mademoiselle Kayser be what she will, it seems to me that I have never loved any human being as I love this woman!"

"Not even Adrienne?" asked his conscience. But Sulpice had his answer ready, Adrienne was not to be compared to any one else. She was the charm and consolation of his daily life. She was the wife, not the "woman." She was his friend. Vaudrey would have cut off an arm to save Adrienne a pang, but he was not uneasy about her. She knew nothing, and would never know. Then, too, he had committed no crime up to this moment. There was a whole host of moral reservations in this "up to this moment."

One afternoon—there was no session at the Chamber that day—Marianne was seated in her little salon. She sat with her slender feet crossed one over the other, warming them at the bright fire in the chimney.

She was greatly annoyed by Justine, a maid engaged and paid by la Dujarrier—as was everything else in the house—who came to say, with the little knowing smile common to servants in such cases, that Monsieur Dachet, the upholsterer, had called twice that morning.

"The upholsterer?"

And Marianne frowned.

"What did he say!" she asked.

"Nothing, only that he would call again to-morrow."

"And you call that nothing?" said Marianne, with an abrupt laugh.

As soon as Justine was gone, she went to a small Lombardy cabinet of ebony incrusted with ivory, and unlocked a drawer. As she opened it the rattle of gold pieces brought a smile to her lips, then with the tips of her white fingers she counted the louis, and with a little grimace closed the drawer and returned to her seat by the fire.

"La Dujarrier's money will not last much longer," she thought.

It was time to make her grand *coup*. Up to this moment her adventure with Sulpice had been romantic and Platonic. The Minister believed himself to be loved for himself alone. He regarded Marianne as an eccentric woman who had thrown off conventional restraints without owing any account to husband or lover. The practical side of the question, the daily necessities of life totally escaped this man to whom was entrusted the interests of France. He had ceased to wonder whence came Marianne's luxuries. He had ceased to think or to analyze, and did not even wish to know. Mademoiselle Kayser's first words that evening aroused him from this apathy.

Marianne knew that Vaudrey was coming, and she hastily left the fire to make her toilette. She put on a peignoir of black satin lined with red surah, *revers* of velvet over masses of old lace revealed the whiteness

of her throat. Her wonderful hair fell over this velvet collar, and her charming head, rising from this fantastic costume, had an especial charm.

Sulpice, when he caught sight of her, stood still in admiration. She was sitting in the centre of the salon arranging a pile of papers in a basket, which was lined with rose-colored, quilted silk and stood on gilt feet.

She extended her hand in an absorbed sort of way, and asked why he stood there and came no nearer.

"I was looking," said the Minister.

"You are always the most gallant of men!" said Marianne, "but I should think by this time you would weary of looking at me. Caprices do not usually last so long."

"The affection I have for you is not a caprice."

"What is it then? I am curious to know."

"It is a passion, Marianne—a profound and absorbing passion."

"Stop there!" cried Marianne. "I know that you can talk well. I have heard you often enough in the Tribune to be sure of that, and a declaration of love is as easy to you as a Ministerial declaration, but to-day, my dear Minister, I am not disposed to hear it, not even from you!"

In these last words there was a tinge of tenderness, which softened the harshness of Marianne's tone.

Sulpice saw in it a mute acceptance of his proffered love.

"Yes;" said Marianne, abruptly, "I am sad—horribly sad."

"Without cause?" asked Vaudrey.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh! I am not one of those women who are ruled by their nerves. When I am out of spirits it is for a reason, and a good one. I beg you to remember this."

"But tell me the reason, my dear Marianne, for I swear to you that I wish to bear at least half of your burthen."

"Thanks; but there are vulgar cares in life that one does not wish to confide to even one's most intimate friends."

"You have no friend more devoted to you than I," said Vaudrey, in a tone of profound conviction.

She knew this well. His soul lay bare before her.

"When one has friends like you, it behooves us to keep them, and not saddle them with our troubles."

"But tell me?" asked Vaudrey. "Tell me what is wrong with you?"

He looked into her eyes, seeking in their depths a secret or an avowal which might escape unawares, and his hands instinctively sought Marianne's which she coldly yielded to him. Leaning toward her to implore her to speak, he felt her soft breath on his cheek, he perceived the perfume which always hung about her, and under her heavy lids he fancied that he saw tears.

"Marianne, I beg of you, tell me what disturbs you. If you have any annoyance which I can change into a joy let me know it, I implore you."

"Ah! If it were an annoyance," she answered, as she abruptly withdrew her hand from Vaudrey's eager

clasp. "But, it is worse—it is a money affair," she said, abruptly, as she saw the astonished expression on Vaudrey's face.

She took up a handful of the papers in her work-basket, and said, with angry disgust:

"Look at these. They are the bills for this Hôtel. Bills of impatient creditors, upholsterers, masons, locksmiths, and so on."

"What! For this Hôtel?"

"Ah! You thought they were paid? I owe for every article of furniture. I owe for everything, in short."

She laughed.

"How did you suppose the niece of the artist Kayser could keep up this luxury which you see around me? I have not a cent, and I have been foolish enough to order all the things and now I see no way of paying for them. You compelled me to tell you all this. I did not do so of my own free will, and I beg your pardon, my dear Vaudrey. Let us talk of something else. What is going on at the Chamber?"

"We will talk of nothing but yourself, Marianne," said the Minister, looking at her with a kind of pity, much as a physician looks at a sick friend.

She was nervously twisting her fingers, and beating a little tattoo with her foot.

He tried to calm her, and to obtain further explanations, but Marianne, as if she had been carried away by the impulse of the moment, refused to continue her confidence. She repeated that nothing could be more

cruel than to trouble one's friends, besides she had a right to keep her own secrets, and Vaudrey by his questions was only increasing his sufferings.

"And you, Marianne, do you not see that you are torturing me by not replying to my entreaties. Am I not interested in the smallest detail of your life, and when I see you in such trouble do you think I am not desirous of averting it?"

She turned quickly toward him, and her gray eyes, flecked with gold, fairly seemed to throw off sparks. With an air as if she had arrived at some sudden determination, she said to Sulpice:

"Then you wish to know even the sorrows of my life? So be it. I warn you, however, that you will not find my story gay." She was silent for a moment. Sulpice shivered under her eyes.

What was this woman about to tell him? Whatever it might be, Vaudrey felt that it could neither add to nor take from the love he felt for her. She had risen from her chair, her arms folded over her black robe, her eyes lighting her pale face and startlingly red lips which seemed to invite a kiss, while her quivering, dilating nostrils indicated the most bitter anger. Standing thus she began to narrate to Vaudrey, who was seated and did not look up to her face, a long story which was true in each ghastly particular—a story of unhappy childhood, of ignorant adolescence, of sadness and disappointments, of falls, and attempts to return to the right path, of deceptions and abuse of confidence—in short it was the story of a ruined life,

it went straight to Vaudrey's heart, which swelled with pity.

"I weary you, perhaps," she said abruptly.

"You!"

He lifted his eyes to her face; they were full of tears. Marianne's eyes flashed with sudden light.

"And this was my life," she said. "I have loved, and I have been betrayed. I believed in one person, and I awoke one fine morning with this prospect before me—that of falling into the mud and doing as so many other and better women have done, take a lover and save myself in that way, for you know the world is more indulgent to success than to repentance. You know Monsieur de Rosas—"

"No—" stammered Vaudrey, before whose eyes rose the Duc's pale face.

"You heard him the other night, surely?"

"I mean that I never spoke to him. Well, Monsieur de Rosas?"

"Monsieur de Rosas loved me. Oh!" she said, with a quick gesture—"wait a moment. He told me that he loved me. He is rich. Why did I not become the friend of de Rosas? It was to receive him that I committed the folly of ordering these things. What was that for a de Rosas? He is rolling in wealth."

"And—Monsieur de Rosas?" asked Vaudrey, who was very pale.

"He went away. I told you that before." And Marianne laughed hysterically. "I regretted him for a moment, but I should have sent him myself, he should not have touched the tips of my fingers."

"Rosas?" repeated the Minister, looking into Marianne's face—

"Rosas," she repeated, and in a half whisper added: "do you know why I would have done that?"

"No," answered Sulpice, trembling.

"Simply because I loved him no longer. I loved another."

She pronounced these last words in a tone that thrilled Sulpice through and through.

"Ah!" said he, going to her side. "Was that the reason? Tell me Marianne, was that the reason?"

She had not told him that she loved him. Only her eyes had spoken; but to Sulpice this was enough. He drew her close to his breast, and with his cheek on the satin of her hair he murmured: "You know that I adore you, Marianne. All that this great Duc has not done for you, let me do. You are in your own home now, Marianne, do you hear?" And then with his lips close to her exquisite ear, he whispered:

"In our home—ours, if you will!"

His lips wandered from her ear to her cheek, thence to her sweet mouth, on which he pressed a long lingering kiss. She gently disengaged herself and said, with flashing eyes and a strange expression of joy:

"It is done!"

Sulpice had never felt, even in the hours of his youth, so intoxicating a sensation as that which now overwhelmed him. With the singular fatuity common to people of facile and fleeting impressions, of closing their eyes and ears to everything save the present,

he forgot the Assembly, he forgot his home and his wife, who was sitting near the window waiting for him. It seemed to him that his horizon was now bounded by these walls hung with silk; by this feminine salon.

Then a feeling of pride swelled his heart. It pleased him to think that he, a mere *bourgeois* of Grenoble, had taken this woman from a Duc, and would pay *en grand seigneur* the debts she had contracted. He lifted his head with a little not to be wondered at pride.

"What shall I do to force these creditors into silence?" he said to Marianne, whose hands he still held.

"Nothing," she replied. "It is enough that you have promised. Now I am safe. We are in our home and together. And if the creditors do not believe me when I tell them to be patient—"

"They shall believe you!" cried Vaudrey. "On my signature any one will lend me money!"

It seemed that Marianne only waited for this word *money* to tell Vaudrey that Claire Dujarrier, an old friend, knew intimately a certain Adolphe Gochard who on the endorsement of some responsible person, would advance a hundred thousand francs, that he was willing to invest in that way. It was only necessary to give Gochard a note payable in three months, with interest at five per cent. This Gochard was a very honest capitalist, who was never exacting. Madame Dujarrier had presented him to Marianne, who had already been obliged to give him one note which she had expected to pay at a certain date.

"And where does this Gochard live?" asked Vaudrey, abruptly.

"Oh! it is not necessary for you to see him," answered Marianne. "Madame Dujarrier will attend to the matter for me, and will give me the money herself."

"A hundred thousand francs in three months!" said the Minister, to himself. It will be easy enough in a place like Paris to find the money. He had, too, his own personal property, in Dauphine. He could, if worse came to worse, mortgage the farms at Saint Laurent du Pont!

The name and the recollection of de Rosas spurred on Vaudrey. That wealthy Seigneur would unquestionably have released this woman from the claws of her creditors without the smallest delay. Vaudrey would do the same, and would give her this money as the Spaniard would have done. He could raise the money in some way, he hardly knew how, but he would do it.

"Have you a pen, Marianne?"

The Minister had not noticed the sheet of white paper half hidden among the satin envelopes and ivory paper knives, upon a Russia leather blotter.

"What do you want to do, my friend?"

She half pushed away the pen-handle of green shark skin which lay by the side of the inkstand. This movement showed Sulpice where it was, and he seated himself at the desk at once.

"A Minister's signature will suffice, I presume," he said, with a smile.

And he commenced to write rapidly.

"How do you spell the name?"

She looked over his shoulder; her face was deadly pale while she spelled the name as Sulpice wrote.

"Adolphe Gochard. Go-c-h-a-r-d!"

"Voila!" said he, as he handed her the folded sheet of paper.

"I must know what you have written, and I will not consent—"

Sulpice held her hands and would not allow her to open the paper.

"No," he said, "put it away; it is the best reply you can make to these people. You can rely on me."

"You insist upon it?" said Marianne, gently.

"I do, indeed. It is the purest selfishness on my part," he answered, "for I wish to be in my own house when I am with you."

He carried those white dimpled hands to his lips, and then holding them tightly in his, pressed kiss after kiss on her throat and her lips, while Marianne, holding the paper which the Minister had just signed, feebly defended herself.

He left her, and dizzy with joy threw himself into the fiâcre at the door.

"Place de la Madelaine," he said to the coachman.

Marianne was left alone. A smile of gratified vanity quivered on her lips as she looked at the lines Vaudrey had written.

"I will give Monsieur Adolphe Gochard my note, payable in three months, if he will consent to advance the amount required by Mademoiselle Kayser."

"La Dujarrier was right," Marianne murmured. "A clever woman can twist any man around her fingers!" Then with the same smile she opened one of the drawers in the Italian cabinet and placed within it the satin paper on which the Minister had written his name.

She well knew that this autograph was the same as gold and was worth a thousand times more than the small pile of Louis still remaining there. Then returning to her chair she sank into it; with her arms folded behind her head and her eyes on the ceiling, she began to dream. Ambitious hopes floated through her brain like clouds, while on her lips, the lips on which Vaudrey had pressed his burning kisses, and which had remained perfectly cold—quivered the same inscrutable smile.

She was thoroughly self-possessed and mistress of herself, while Vaudrey was embarrassed and bewildered. It seemed to him that a wide perspective of future joys opened before him—joys of which he had dreamed from his youth up. It was glorious to be powerful, but to be loved was better. His brain was confused; it seemed to him that he heard Ramel's voice, and then Marianne's face appeared and Sulpice saw her smiling from the glass of his fiâcre like a half-faded pastel from its frame. He was thankful to walk when the fiâcre left him at the Madelaine. The fresh air did him a world of good. He threw back his head proudly—it seemed to him that people turned to look at him as he passed. He would have preferred, how-

ever, that they should have said to each other "There goes the lover of Marianne Kayser," than "There goes Monsieur Vaudrey, the Minister!"

He reluctantly returned to La Place Beauvau. He was still with Marianne. He recalled her attitudes, each inflection of her voice. These papers and dispatches to read, these signatures to affix—in short, his whole duties seemed to him intolerably commonplace. He did not at once enter his Cabinet, but allowed Warcolier, the Assistant Secretary of State, to go on with the work. Singularly enough he was eager to meet Adrienne; perhaps it was to ascertain "if she saw anything." There was a tinge of remorse in this eagerness; he wished to prove to himself that he had occasioned his wife no suffering, and with his affectionate manner and loving smile, efface his fault in his own eyes.

Adrienne was in her salon. Sulpice heard voices through the door.

"Madame has visitors?" he asked of the servant.

"Yes, sir; Monsieur de Lissac."

"Ah! Guy!" said Sulpice to himself.

He entered the room, and extended his hand to his friend.

"I am delighted to see you!" he exclaimed.

Guy had risen and stood with his hat in his hand, while Vaudrey stooped over his wife and pressed a kiss on her uplifted brow.

"Oh!" answered Lissac, "it was not your Excellency to whom I came to pay my respects. It was to his charming wife."

"I am delighted all the same," said Vaudrey. "My poor Adrienne has not many visitors outside of our official relations."

"Which she naturally finds very dull! I have, therefore, requested permission to call sometimes in an informal way. The fact is, Madame," said Lissac, gayly, "this wretched Minister here desires you to receive the most passionate declarations from morning until night, while he is buried in his portfolio. I never saw such a husband!"

Adrienne flushed a little and turned her tender eyes toward Vaudrey. Her whole soul was in them.

Sulpice tried to laugh at Lissac's jests.

"Take care!" continued Guy. "Madame Vaudrey is so much alone that, as I said, I intend to come as often as she will allow me to cheer her solitude, and I will not promise that I shall not fall in love with her!" He turned respectfully toward Adrienne and said, in his usual gentlemanly tone:

"I say all this, Madame, to make him understand that nothing in the world, not even a piece of morocco —his portfolio is morocco, is it not?—is worth the joy of being with a wife like yourself. And the wretch does not see this! I speak, you perceive, as if I were one of the Opposition journals!"

Sulpice smiled faintly, but he divined under Guy's pleasantries a serious meaning. Perhaps Adrienne had been complaining to him of the sadness and solitude of her life. He was annoyed at this. After all, did he not do all that was in his power to please his

wife? But a man like himself was not born to spend his time at a woman's side. The wife of a Minister must bear her portion of the burthen. And, as if Adrienne divined her husband's thoughts, she interposed quickly to put a stop to Lissac's raillery, which she saw was not agreeable to the Minister.

"Do not listen to Monsieur de Lissac. I am very happy; I make no complaint!"

Vaudrey took her hand and pressed it closely. Her confiding smile, her frank appeal, recalled Marianne's strange eyes.

"Dear child!" he murmured.

He could not find one word more to say. No spontaneous tenderness came straight from his heart to his lips, as would once have been the case.

"I am off!" said Guy, "but if you will permit me, Madame, I will occasionally bring my dullness here and petition your indulgence."

"You are always welcome, Monsieur de Lissac," answered Adrienne, as she extended her hand.

Guy bowed low before her and departed.

Sulpice went through the salons with his friend.

"Shall I tell you something?" said Guy. "Your wife is horribly bored, and you had better look out. This Hôtel is a dismal place, it is cold as well as dull, and for a woman to be nearly all the time in it alone is a wretched thing. Cajole the majority, my dear Minister, as much as you please, but do not forget your wife. I don't intend to be a traitor, and yet I warn you that if I often find her as sad and as

charming as I saw her to-day, I shall tell her that I adore her! I am sure I shall, for your wife is charming. I would give all your honors for a lock of her hair. Farewell, Monsieur Le Ministre!"

"You are a simpleton!" said Vaudrey, with a friendly tap on Guy's shoulder.

"I may be, I don't deny it, but all the same I assure you if you don't love her enough, I shall love her too much! And I warn you that it had better be me than another! *Au revoir!*"

"*Au revoir!*" repeated Sulpice, mechanically.

He tried to smile, however, and, turning away, hurried down the stairs to his Cabinet, where a pile of reports were awaiting him. He began to finger them nervously, and to read them with a frowning brow.

CHAPTER X.

ADRIENNE.

AMONG the common-place visits which Madame Vaudrey received on her "day," there were but two which gave her the smallest satisfaction, and that was when Denis Ramel consented to leave Batignolles to come to see her, or when Guy de Lissac appeared with news from the outside world.

Adrienne was frightfully lonely. She hardly knew any one in Paris, for, after Vaudrey was installed in the Chaussée d'Antin, she had not had time to make acquaintances with the wives of the Deputies, the majority of whom, beside, continued to reside in the Provinces or lived at Versailles, from motives of economy.

Her husband's new honors had brought her hosts of visitors, who were much more like petitioners. These official receptions saddened her. It was always the same thing—the same common-place conversation, the same compliments and current of double meaning. The same words, as dismal as a shower, fell with the regularity of drops of rain. Even young girls, who were brought up in this political atmosphere, talked in the same strain.

Poor Adrienne did her best to be interested in these

things. As it was her husband's life it must also be hers. She had dreamed, however, of quite another youth, and on bright, sunny days she thought with longing of her dear home on the shores of the Isére.

She did not allow Vaudrey to suspect her sadness. She knew that people had said to him that she did not look happy. A Minister's wife ought to know how to smile, and this was what Madame Marsy told to her each time that she came to the Ministerial residence. This woman, who never gave herself the smallest uneasiness in regard to her son, but let him grow up as he pleased, was herself always in the best of spirits, although her life had been a most troubled one, and her widowhood one of many experiences. She endeavored to become intimate with Adrienne, and to counsel her on all points. She often told Madame Gerson that if Adrienne had more air and style she would be quite charming.

"Unfortunately, she has a most provincial air, and she knows nothing in the world about politics, strange as it may appear."

"She never troubles herself about them," answered her pretty friend, with a laugh.

"Ah! if Sabine or Blanche Gerson had been in the position of this little Bourgeoise from Grenoble how different it would have been, and Paris would have seen what an Athenian Republic was."

Sabine Marsy was very wise. She gave Adrienne bits of advice which were in reality gentle reproaches. Madame Gerson, as well as Madame Marsy, aspired to

Adrienne's intimacy. They both liked to talk of having been there in a familiar way, and to be early on the list of guests when the Minister received or gave a ball. Sabine Marsy had gotten over her idea of being a power among the artists, and wished to play a political part in Paris. Madame Gerson, or Blanche, as she was called, had also the same ambitions. She wished to go everywhere and see everybody. She belonged, body and soul, to that terrible machine called Society. She adored *chic*, a word which is as indefinable as the thing itself. Everything in the world was, in Madame Gerson's opinion, divided into two classes—that which was *chic* and that which was not *chic*. It was not simply her costumes, her hats and her gloves, her flowers and her jewels, but the very book she must read, the perfume she should use, the music she must play on her piano, the bonbons she offered, the opinions to be advanced on the last picture—these must also be *chic*.

Madame Gerson would have preferred to know that her honor was compromised rather than that she should be laughed at. The result of this was that Adrienne always knew what Blanche would say on every subject, and was, therefore, not in the least interested in her almost daily visits.

Blanche would have been heart-broken not to have been seen in the large salon on the occasion of the President's reception at the Elysée, at the Minister's on some especially important occasion, and not to be saluted in the Tribune by some Minister on the day of

the Grand Prix, would have filled her with woe. Frail and slender, but elastic as only a Parisienne can be, she dragged her husband to receptions and balls, talking loudly, chatting and laughing, delighted when she heard her name announced from the lips of the servant.

While he, poor man! Tired out when he came from his office, after a hard day's work, he hurried into his dress coat and white cravat, and meekly entered the carriage to accompany his wife to some entertainment where, in some corner, he snatched a few minutes' rest, went home in haste, went to bed in haste, got up in haste the next morning, to go through with the same thing again. He dragged after him, like a convict's ball, this pretty, indefatigable creature, who smiled on everybody but himself, danced with any one else, dressed for others, and lavished on him only her pains, her weariness, her headaches and ill-tempers. And for these two devotees of *chic* the winter passed, as full of hard work as if they had been convicts, and they were quite ready, when summer came, to go to the seashore or country to rest both minds and bodies.

"Ah! I prefer my home and my own life!" thought Madame Vaudrey.

Sabine and Madame Gerson, with the wives of the other Ministers, the wives of the Chiefs of Bureaus, were the most assiduous visitors whom Adrienne received. They thought her provincial, and she thought them most formidable. These Parisian women seemed to her machines, all wound up like musical boxes.

"The truth is, they bore you to death," said de Lissac to her one night. He felt great pity for this quiet creature, whom he considered a thousand times prettier than the dashing Madame Gerson, whose beauty was so praised by the newspapers.

"No—they do not bore me," she said, "but they trouble me."

"Ah! I see, they are always in a flutter. There is no rest about them—they are Express trains. But they are amused only when they have no audience to smile. How can they see the landscape when the locomotive moves so rapidly?"

Adrienne, however, felt that under all this irony a positive kindly feeling existed. Lissac's wit pleased her, although it amazed her at times—but the gayety of the young man aroused her from her apathy.

At first from curiosity and then from a sentiment of mingled respect and devotion, Guy began to study this delicate and sensitive nature so thoroughly permeated with love for her husband, and who he saw was at times in almost as great an agony as if she were in an exhausted receiver. It seemed to her that this enormous Hotel, peopled with the ghosts of the Past, was a mere *maison meublée*. These salons, built for the Maréchal Beauvau—those walls which had heard the sobs of Madame d'Houdetot in the presence of Saint Laurent's last sigh, appeared to Adrienne the abode of ennui, of official solemn ennui.

She fretted at her solitude, and often lost her way among the salons of the Ministerial residence. And

when she traversed these cold, dismal rooms with their chairs symmetrically arranged against the walls—looking as if they were never occupied—and which she was quite sure never had a word to say to each other, for it had been an article of faith with her from her childhood up, that the chairs and tables of her home had voices and conversed among each other. Vast, ample rooms, where the curtains over the bookcases were kept constantly drawn to conceal the fact that there were no books there, were as dismal to her as open tombs.

Yes, she stifled in this house with its Gobelin tapestries; it was intensely sorrowful to her, for nothing recalled her delightful provincial home—the home at Grenoble, with its garden full of lilacs, where she occasionally went to read a book while Sulpice wrote before his open window in the room above. Ah! these rooms in that humble country town—the vague happiness of that secluded spot! The apartment of the Chaussée d'Antin was preferable to her present abode, for at least she was there free to think and to speak, without feeling that she was being watched, and without laboring under the impression of eyes and ears in every corner, and of scornful lips criticising her every act and word. She had often of late asked herself if even for Sulpice the honors of this life were worth its slavery, and if its fevers were not the cause of his pale and jaded looks.

"If you had not loved me so much," she said to him with one of her timid smiles, "I should think you loved me no more."

"What folly! You have but one rival, Adrienne."

"Ah! I know her well. But she is all-powerful. She takes you from me all the time. It is Politics. You may be glorious and I will be happy, or resigned, whichever you please. I adore you, as you know. I would give you my life, and therefore I can endure these days of ennui for your sake."

She did her best to bring into this official dwelling some of the habits of order which she had learned in her girlhood. She found that the desserts from the table disappeared with incredible rapidity; that dishes scarcely touched and bottles that had been simply opened, were carried into the kitchen. She remarked upon it; the contemptuous smiles of the servants were their only replies, and she felt ashamed.

One of them said to her that the table of Monsieur Pichereau, the predecessor of Monsieur Vaudrey, was very limited, but that was nothing, for Monsieur Pichereau had no digestion; that before his time plenty of balls and fêtes were given, but then one of these Ministers was a Marquis, the other a Count.

She heard one of the men servants say to another:

"As if it were not our money that the Ministers eat! It is the money of the electors. They give us wages, we give them appointments; it is a fair exchange." These domestics were sent away at once, but their remarks often returned to ~~Marianne's~~ memory and inspired her with horror of this retinue by which she was surrounded—who served her with an air of cold deference, but without attachment.

Vaudrey himself suffered from similar pin pricks. He lived in an atmosphere of continual praise, of petitions concealed under complaints. He had ample leisure to ascertain how many angles the human body can assume in bowing. Everybody he encountered asked or wanted to ask for something. Promotion was the pet dream of this host of employés who buzzed about the new Minister.

Sulpice was simply besieged. Letters of recommendation and of introduction rained upon him. The Minister felt utterly disgusted under all this, and he did his best to check it by sending for Warcolier, the assistant secretary, and bidding him reply to all these people and tell them that he had no protection to give, no favor to show, and that in future he should grant promotion to merit alone. "You understand, Monsieur Warcolier?"

Warcolier rolled his huge eyes about, and then with a satisfied smile passed his plump hand over his blonde whiskers now thickly peppered with gray, and observed quietly that Monsieur Le Ministre was making a great deal of trouble for himself, and that he really ought to find something for his friends. His appointment to the Ministership of the Interior had naturally given birth to many hopes which it was expedient to gratify. Vaudrey would never be pardoned for such a deception.

"What deception?" asked Sulpice. "I promised reforms and I intend to make them. But they laugh at my reforms, and ask what? Appointments!"

"Very true!" answered Warcolier, for once quite logical.

"But I can satisfy these demands only by removing all who are now in office. There is not one single Deputy who has not some candidate to recommend."

"Which is quite natural sir, since there is not a Deputy who is not a candidate himself."

"Then it is all the more necessary that he should be independent of his Electors."

"Each for himself, Monsieur Le Ministre! Only yesterday, one of my constituents whose wife had just given birth to an infant, sent to me to know if I could recommend a wet nurse. And our colleague, Perraud (des Vosges), told me that one of his Electors requested him to bring him an umbrella on his next return. Constituents seem to look upon their Deputies as errand boys!"

"I can only say that I wish there were a little more morality and a little more dignity in the government. I like to give," said Vaudrey, "but I know how to refuse."

"You had best wait for that, however, until your popularity is insured. When, however, it is decided that such and such a Minister has proved more useful than you, in serving the personal interests of these people, then you are lost. There are other Ministers in the horizon."

"Yes, Granet, for example! He promised more butter than bread, and to give more money for dried crusts than for fresh butter. But I do not wish to deceive any one!"

"Do as you please, Monsieur Le Ministre, do as you please!" Warcolier answered with a gentle smile.

Sulpice did not like this man. He rounded his periods quite too fluently. He was in fact repelled by this Warcolier, who affected in public such singular rigidity of principles and in private abandoned it all, to conciliate and please. It was only necessary for the Minister to discourage undue aspirations, for the assistant secretary to put on a very wise look and a shrewd smile. His very silence signified anything he pleased and strengthened the hopes of the aspirants. Vaudrey knew nothing of this mole-like undermining; he did not know that whenever he refused to do anything for a man, that Warcolier offered consolation and hope, but he distrusted this Republican who had been an Imperialist until the triumph of the Republic, and watched him as he thought, very narrowly.

After all, what had he to fear from him? The President of the Council, Monsieur Collard, enjoyed the absolute confidence of the Chief of State, and the Chamber. The majority of the Cabinet was compact. There was not a cloud in the horizon, not the smallest black spot. Vaudrey could continue in his position without uneasiness, and give all his leisure moments to this woman whose quick glances and bewildering smile followed him wherever he went.

This Marianne! How he loved her, and from day to day he loved her more. It seemed to him that he had come face to face with the only woman in the world who could understand him. He had loved before of course—many times—to these loved ones he had written verses and sung songs, and fancied at the

time that they had won his heart. He had loved and perhaps still loved fondly and sincerely the poor woman who bore his name. He recalled with tears in his eyes the joy he felt when he took his young wife in his arms. He remembered her timidity and her affection. But Adrienne's love was dull compared to the passion of this Marianne, who was so thorough a woman, whose wit amused while it startled him, and who refused only to gratify.

When she touched him with her hand, that slender hand weighed down with rings, Vaudrey felt as if he had received a shock from an electric battery. He believed that she was the only woman he had ever loved, as she really was the only woman he had ever loved as he did her. When he said as much to her she had a way of replying in an interrogative tone which was at once the doubt of an experienced coquette and the pleasant assent of gratified vanity.

"Yes?" she said—

And in this "*yes*" there was a world of tenderness and of promise.

Thanks to Dujarrier, Marianne had paid the rent of her Hôtel, her servants' wages and her most pressing debts. Claire Dujarrier advanced the hundred thousand francs that Mademoiselle Kayser demanded, and called them lent by Adolphe Gochard; in reality she took them from her safe—Gochard had not one cent—and Vaudrey signed a note for value received, payable in three months.

Dujarrier retained twenty thousand francs for her commission, and gave Marianne only eighty.

"But Vaudrey's note is for one hundred thousand francs."

"You are very dull, my dear child! Suppose I lose the rest! Suppose your Minister never pays."

"But that is absurd!"

"I have heard of such instances, at all events."

Having signed this note, Vaudrey felt all the brutal satisfaction of a man who pays a beautiful creature, and yet believes himself to be loved.

In the beginning, Sulpice went to la Rue Prony only in the day or in the evening coming home from a Reception or the Theatre. Marianne was waiting for him, and he hurried in, looking about to see that he was not observed. Marianne was proud of the complete subjection to which she had reduced this man. She amused herself by calling him "Your Excellency," and by reading aloud to him from a book which purported to give instructions in regard to the etiquette to be observed toward a Minister.

"If I ever desire an audience, I must address myself to the Secretary, I suppose! Listen to this book, it is very droll.

"'On the proper toilette—The etiquette for the toilette is not severe, but it is in good taste to dress as for any ceremonious visit. For women a simple costume and fresh gloves are essential.'"

She laughed aloud.

"Listen!" she continued, reading from her book. "'In speaking as well as writing to a Minister, the titles Monseigneur and Your Excellency must always

be used. In leaving the Salon you make a profound bow at the door.'

"It is delicious, this! Your Excellency! Monseigneur! Release me, Sulpice, that I may rise and make my reverence. I adore you. You are my Minister! my lover, my everything. I do not respect you in the least, but I love you!"

He felt strange thrills run through his whole frame, as she talked thus, and was filled with despair at the idea of leaving her. But he was afraid to remain a night away from the Hôtel. Great as was the confidence his wife felt in him, ignorant, credulous, and unsuspicious as she was, a night spent far from her would have unquestionably startled and warned her.

He invented receptions which lasted to unusual hours, and night sessions which kept him out late.

"It seems to me," said Adrienne, one morning at breakfast, "that these night sessions are becoming more frequent."

"Don't speak of it!" said Sulpice. "The Deputies are crowding the work of three weeks into one, in order to get through and have their vacation."

Adrienne never opened the *Officiel* which Vaudrey always put into his private desk, declaring that the mere sight of a newspaper reminded him too much of politics.

One day, however, he ordered the newspapers to be brought into the salon where he happened to be with Adrienne. He told her that he was to spend the day at Guise or Vervas where an important Deputy had

invited him to visit his manufactory. He should go away in the morning, and should not return until the next day about noon.

"How long the time will seem!" sighed his wife.

"Not any longer to you than to me; besides, you are at home."

"At home? We have but one home, and that is at Grenoble."

"Dear child!" cried Vaudrey, embracing his wife tenderly—perhaps, sincerely.

And he departed. He went to Guise, returned the same evening, and gave orders to the Director of the Press that the following statement should appear in the morning papers:

"Yesterday, the Minister of the Interior passed the day at Guise with Monsieur Delair, Deputy from Disne. He dined and slept at the house of this gentleman. Monsieur Vaudrey was to return to Paris this morning."

He showed this paragraph to Adrienne, saying:

"It is astonishing! one can't take one step without its being printed and distributed to the populace."

"Tell me all about it," murmured Adrienne, "are you tired? You look pale. Did you make any speech? Were you applauded?"

It was with kisses that Vaudrey replied. What could he say to Adrienne? She knew that all receptions were alike. Monsieur Delair was very nice, but it was wearisome.

"The day seemed very long to me," he concluded.

"And to me also," she replied.

Sulpice had certainly been to Guise, but the last train of the previous evening had brought him to la Rue Prony. He had learned to pull the wires, and the telegraph manœuvred by the Director of the Press, at once established an alibi for Adrienne. He brought in his hand a large bouquet culled in the *Parc de Guise* by the two daughters of Monsieur Delair.

Marianne, who was expecting him, placed the flowers in Japanese vases, and said to him as she threw her arms around his neck:

"Ah! you thought of me!"

Vaudrey, when he drove to the Ministerial residence in the morning, leaned back with closed eyes to think of Marianne. Then he suddenly opened them with a start to look at the workmen who with hands in their pockets, red noses and old silk handkerehiefs twisted around their throats were discussing the speech made by the Minister of the Interior—a speech not made, as Sulpice had told Adrienne, at a night session, but at noon, when Vaudrey had uttered this sentence:

"I, whose hours are all consecrated to the amelioration of the lot of the poor, and who can say with the poet, if I may be pardoned the egotism—

'That which I take from my nights I add to my days.'"

And Sulpice heard again the cheers with which these words were greeted. He saw again the large hands outstretched to greet him as he descended from the Tribune. He recalled his sensation of pleasure at this

greeting, and yet was more than half displeased with himself when he saw these horny hands holding the paper which contained his printed speech.

Vaudrey appeared at the Residence as busy and hurried as usual. He had no time he said, to receive these suitors. Warcolier must attend to them, and Warcolier was only too glad to curry favor with these people. Guy de Lissac and Ramel both pointed out to Vaudrey the eagerness with which Warcolier snatched at any opportunity to court popularity.

"He is not over fond of you, this Warcolier," said Guy.

"He will undermine you to a dead certainty," added Ramel.

"He will if he can, of that I am sure," answered the Minister, "but I have my majority steady and compact."

Ramel shrugged his shoulders.

Guy had another source of uneasiness in regard to Sulpice. He had vaguely discovered that the Minister was neglectful of his wife. He was absorbed in politics, that was all. Vaudrey loved his wife, who adored him, and by whom he was adored, but he neglected her all the same.

Lissac found them one morning amicably discussing a question of which the newspapers were full, that of divorce. Apropos of nothing, Adrienne had spoken of a paragraph in the morning papers, a faithless husband. Monsieur Vauthier was the lover of a singer at the Cafés Chanteuse, who was known and celebrated as

Lea Thibault. The wife demanded a separation, and Adrienne had been reading the evidence. "Poor creature!" she said, "how she must have suffered!" Sulpice did not reply.

"Do you know that if such a thing should happen to me I would never forgive you."

"Are you mad, dear? What on earth do you mean?"

"I mean what I say; the mere idea that you could touch another woman does not fill me so much with anger as with horror and disgust. No, I would never forgive you!"

"What queer notions you take into your head. It is these newspapers that have done it. Henceforward I return to my old plan. Not one single journal shall come into this room. What put it into your head to read them?"

"It was the man's name, Vauthier, so like your own, that attracted me. And then those words are so sad—separation—I should prefer an absolute divorce."

"How strange you are!" repeated Sulpice, who was really very uneasy.

Vaudrey was delighted to hear Guy announced in the middle of this discussion. The conversation was changed, but Adrienne, who had been greatly impressed by the incident, returned to the subject with pertinacious resolution.

Lissac laughed.

"The idea of coming into this room to hear a discussion about divorce. Do not be troubled, Madame,

it is not your husband who will ever present to the Chambers a law in favor of divorce."

"Who knows?" answered Sulpice. "I am, I assure you, in favor of divorce."

"And so am I," said Adrienne, "for I do not understand how a woman can belong to two men at once."

"You reason from yourself, my child. The unhappy creatures who suffer—and—. The actual law allows separation, and this separation is the same as divorce, except that it is more cruel and more unjust, a divorce without liberty, a divorce that perpetuates and only lengthens the chasm."

"Sulpice is right, Madame, and sooner or later France will have this frightful divorce law."

"After all," answered Adrienne, "what does it matter to me?" And she threw the journal into the waste paper basket with its *Vauthier versus Vauthier*. "We have no concern with it, either he or I. He loves me, I love him. I am sure of him as he is of me. He may demand all the laws he chooses; he will not be selfish in doing so for he will not profit by them."

"Not I, indeed!" said Sulpice laughing, only too glad to escape from Adrienne's strange and almost intuitive uneasiness. There was an unnatural sound in his laugh, for Sulpice felt an acute pang of remorse at the expression of his wife's entire confidence. He thought of Marianne, and was impatient to see her, but this conversation had made him uncomfortable. He was in haste to go back to la Rue Prony. The Hôtel

Beauvan weighed upon his spirits—it was like a prison from which he escaped with eagerness. Yes, it was a prison to him as well as to Adrienne, a prison from which he fled to Marianne's boudoir. And while he was there the woman he had disdained and abandoned, who was sad without well knowing why, who felt afraid in that great official Residence, so full of echoes and ghosts of the past, took the carriage which Vaudrey sent back from the Chamber and drove —

Where do my readers think she drove?

"You ought to go about and make visits," the Minister had said; "it would amuse you a little, and you should have the air of being in society."

She made but one visit, however. She gave the coachman the address of the apartment in La Chaussée d'Antin, where she had spent such happy evenings with Sulpice. She went back to those empty rooms, now as cold and cheerless as a tomb, and when she bade the concierge open the windows, the sunlight streamed in, in long dusty rays. She closed the doors and remained there in peace. She sat in Vaudrey's chair and at Vaudrey's table, and lived once more the old life. She could see him bending over his books and papers. Every room recalled a vanished joy—she remembered that here he had kissed her, there he had smiled upon her as he left the room. Ah! would that she were there again.

Power! Popularity! Glory! And for what good? Were these worth one of those blessed hours she had passed in this dear home where every joy was

hers except that of hearing the shrill cry or the merry laugh of a child.

Poor Sulpice! How cheerfully he bore his heavy burthen. He gave his health and his life to politics, while here he had found consolation and sympathy.

Adrienne went away with reddened eyes. Her visits to her old home were like pilgrimages. She entered her carriage and dried her eyes gently, warming her handkerchief with her breath that Sulpice might not see that she had been weeping. And, in the Faubourg Saint Honoré, when her well-known carriage passed the shops, there were women among the milliners and dressmakers—envious women—who said, as they shook their heads:

"There goes the Minister's wife. Ah! she has a happy time!"

CHAPTER XI.

POLITICS.

MARIANNE was thoroughly content. Not that her ambition was completely gratified, but, after all, Sulpice, instead of Rosas, was not so bad an exchange. A Minister, even were he a temporary one, was a power in the land. Never, in her former life, would she have ventured to dream of such a thing.

Appetite had come, however, with success. She now sought some way of managing matters, some combination by which she could secure a fortune. What could she ask of Sulpice? What should she insist upon? She recalled legends she had heard of, extravagancies of which men had been guilty at such times, and she knew that this man was hers, bound hand and foot, a prisoner at her feet. She understood him thoroughly —all his weaknesses, all his ignorance—for in the presence of this thoroughly *blasée* woman, Vaudrey had allowed himself to open his heart with the most entire frankness. It was a duel he fought with this woman, a duel of interests which he mistook for passion.

She had studied and classified him very quickly.

She felt that in this Hôtel in la Rue Prony, where she was not in her own house, but where she had

encamped as on conquered territory, Sulpice was positively dazzled and bewildered. It was an entirely new world to him, who was, as Granet called him, a thorough provincial.

Uncle Kayser came often to see his niece, and cast many a disapproving glance upon the tapestries and bric-à-brac.

"Your surroundings lack dignity!" he said to Marianne, as he smoked his pipe, lying on a divan as if he had been in his own dingy atélier.

Then, in an easy tone, with his eyes fixed on the ceiling, and as if following out some chance idea, he said:

"But tell me if all these things come from your Minister? If so, he is a generous fellow!"

Marianne quickly silenced him. He was not to meddle in things which did not concern him. He must, of all things, learn to hold his tongue. Did he forget that Vaudrey was married, and that the least indiscretion—"

"Oh! do not trouble yourself to give me advice," interrupted the painter. "I am as mute as a fish, all the more that I do not approve of your escapade. In the first place, you have left your home for this place. It is pretty here, certainly, but a little *cocotte*. As I said before, it lacks dignity and austerity. What time does your Minister usually make his appearance? I wish to speak to him—"

"On the question of Morality, I presume," said Marianne, with a little mocking smile.

"Oh! by no means. It is none of my business what he does. No, I have an idea in my head. A uniform decoration for all the Mayors' offices in Paris —Modern Marriages—an Allegory—*Law, Duty and Love*—another allegory—something that shall be at once striking and interesting. A painting which shall make people think; for the mere contemplation of elevated works ameliorates the morals of the masses. You understand?"

"Perfectly. You want an order."

"That is a vile word. Do people order a true artist? He obeys his inspiration—he carves out his ideal! An order! Upon my word, that is too much!"

Marianne did not choose that Sulpice should be assailed by any one but herself. She determined that any influence he might have should be exerted in her behalf alone.

She had nothing to fear, however. Sulpice was as entirely her property as she believed him to be. Like many another man who has grown old without knowing anything of life, Sulpice knew nothing of women. And this Marianne was a woman ten times over. All about the frame of her picture affected Vaudrey's imagination. The heavy curtains that veiled the windows, the carpets so rich in thickness, the cushioned chairs, covered with glowing Eastern fabrics, the huge mirrors reflecting the large marble dressing table where lay innumerable ivory brushes and shell combs, scissors and bottles of perfume, cloissonné trays. And through a half-open door Sulpice caught a glimpse of a bath-

room, the floor of which was of blue Delft tiles; light steam ascended from the bath, already prepared for that lovely form on which he gazed with such delight.

The recollection of this scene never forsook him. No matter where he was, at the Chamber or in the Council Chamber, not even when with Adrienne, did he cease to recall it. His wife seeing his absorption, carefully avoided interrupting him.

Vaudrey was able, however, to throw off in some degree these thoughts when hurriedly called upon to make some speech in the Tribune or to give his advice and announce some opinion in the Council Chamber.

Never had he accomplished more business or shown more activity, although he was unquestionably more excitable and nervous than heretofore. The President of the Council, Monsieur Collard, often said to him:

"Too much zeal, my dear Minister! A political man should always be cool."

"I shall be cooler when I am older," answered Sulpice, laughing.

He went occasionally to ask Ramel's advice, as he had promised to do. The petty shopkeepers and the laundresses in la Rue Boursault never suspected when they saw a coupé stop before the door of the old Journalist that a Minister was in it.

Sulpice often experienced in the bustle of life an urgent need of an hour with his old friend. Besides, la Rue Boursault was on his way to la Rue Prony. He sometimes found Marianne out, and then he went

to Ramel's and remained there until he thought Marianne had returned.

"Well, Ramel," Sulpice would say, "are you pleased with me?"

"And why should I not be? You are an honest man, faithful and courageous. It is not of yourself that I am afraid, it is of your *entourage*."

"You mean Warcolier?"

"Yes, Warcolier and several others. Men who say to me with a supercilious, important air, on the few occasions when they condescend to speak to me at all, 'And you are doing nothing, nowadays, when do you mean to do something?' As if I had not done enough in my life."

Denis Ramel smiled as he spoke, and the Minister contemplated with a feeling of intense respect this man who had toiled so severely, and never had his reward nor asked for it.

"I would like you to edit a Journal, again," said Vaudrey, "and announce all these truths."

"Are you mad? A Journal that announced the truth would not last six months; no one would buy it!"

As Sulpice was going away there was a ring at Ramel's door.

"Ah! a visit. Excuse me, my dear Sulpice."

And Ramel went to open the door.

It was a man of about fifty, dressed like a poor mechanic in a shabby overcoat and pantaloons all shining at the knees, who came in holding in his hand a rouud

felt hat. He bowed timidly, saying once or twice "I beg pardon," and then stood on the threshold without coming in, in an embarrassed attitude, a faint smile quivered on his lips, half hidden by his iron-gray beard.

"Excuse me, I interrupt you. I will come back again."

"No, no—come in, Garnier," said Ramel.

The man entered, bowing to Ramel, whom he did not know, and on a sign from Denis he took a seat on the edge of a chair and fingered his hat nervously. Occasionally he carried his hand to his lips to check a troublesome cough.

"You ask for truth? Listen a little," said Ramel in Vaudrey's ear.

And, without naming Sulpice, he began to question this man who became emboldened by degrees, and to whose cheeks came a bright color as he talked.

"Have you plenty of work, now? Oh, you may speak plainly in the presence of this gentleman, he is interested in all you may say!"

The man shrugged his shoulders with a sad smile, in which there was a dash of bitterness. He confessed in a gentle, resigned sort of way that his sufferings had been severe. It seemed to him that in France, as well as in the rest of Europe, that there was great difficulty in obtaining work. His master, who was an old man, had tried to sell out his workshop, but could find no purchaser, and, finally, closed his shutters; he was too ill to continue, and the four or five men whom he employed were thrown on the street. "Fortunately,"

continued Garnier "I have neither wife nor child, and a man can get along somehow by himself!" But his companions had children. Rousselet had five, and he was in great trouble. There ought to be some Bureaux of Assistance, some Government Loan or something, he did not know what, but there should be some way of preventing this distress which was so entirely unmerited.

"You are interested in politics, then?" asked Vaudrey, curiously, for he divined a quick intelligence in this poor, discouraged man whose dry, spasmodic cough at times nearly choked him.

Garnier looked at Ramel before he replied, then he said gently:

"No; not much at present. That sort of thing is all over for me, but I let others do as they please. I have had my share."

He said this in a very low tone, but it spoke of bitter associations.

"It is, nevertheless, very droll," added the man, "to see how strangely things are managed. Instead of continually upsetting the Ministry and all that sort of thing, they would, in my opinion, be much better employed in busying themselves a little with those who are dying of hunger, for there are plenty of such cases, it were foolish to deny it. What is it to me whether Pichereau or Vaudrey is Minister at a time when I know not where I shall sleep, when all my savings are gone, nor if the baker will trust me when he finds that I am out of work."

Ramel, when he heard Vaudrey's name, was on the point of making a sign to this man, but Sulpice abruptly interfered and bade the man go on.

"Please remember, Monsieur Ramel, that I am not a grumbler. I have always been contented with my life. I have gladly executed all the orders that came to me, and did my work to the satisfaction of the people who employed me. And all went well. Nowadays, I have no work, and, perhaps, Monsieur Ramel, you might put me in the way of finding something to do. I can do almost everything from heavy work to copying. I should prefer to have writing to do because you see, the fire in the forge, the coal gas and the heat choking me, hurry matters too much," and he laid his thin, feverish hand on his chest.

Vaudrey was touched to the heart with the patient pathos of these words, this gentle demand for work. All that he had heard said, in the innumerable discussions on the question of bread for the people, had never half as much affected him.

He would have liked to do something at once for this poor man, and promise him alleviation, but he could not say one word, for Vaudrey, literally, had no position to give to any one, no matter how trustworthy or deserving the person might be.

"I will come again, and we will talk of him," he said to Ramel, designating Garnier by a look. "Do not tell him who I am. Upon my word, I should be ashamed to have him know. Poor fellow!"

"Multiply him by three or four hundred thousand and you make politics!" said Ramel.

Vaudrey saluted the workman who returned his bow with timid eagerness, and the Minister, lightly running down the stairs, jumped into the carriage in haste.

In his ears still echoed the voice of this man, as he said, "What does it matter to me which is Minister, Pichereau or Vaudrey!"

On reaching the Place Beauvau, Sulpice found a dispatch which sent him to the Elysée with all possible speed, while at the same time, startling and amazing him. Monsieur Collard had been struck down by apoplexy in a corridor in the Ministerial residence. The President of the Council had died thus suddenly, and it was on him (Vaudrey) that the eyes of the President had fallen, and it was he who was to fill this vacancy—he who was to take the important position which only two hours before had been Monsieur Collard's! President of the Council! He, Vaudrey, at the head of the Cabinet, the first in the country save one! The joyous astonishment which such a proposal naturally awakened did not leave him much time to dwell on the melancholy death of Collard. Sulpice had never much liked this man, although they were so much together from political associations, considering him entirely behind the age with his stereotyped ideas. The President's offer proved his own popularity, and also that his influence had increased since his recent appointment. How he would be applauded at Grenoble, and what a shock it would be to Granet.

Sulpice hastened to Adrienne to announce this news,

which would not be official until after the funeral, and then went to the Hôtel Beauvau in triumph. One thing saddened him, and this was, not the recollection of Collard, but of the man whom he had met at Ramel's, and who, when the *Officiel* had been mentioned, shrugged his shoulders and said, sarcastically:

"And what then?"

He hardly snatched time to whisper in Adrienne's ear the hurried words, "I am President of the Council," nor to notice the almost indifferent smile of the young wife, but he said to himself that a personal visit to the public building where Collard lay dead was absolutely obligatory. He drove as quickly as possible to the Place Vendôme. Before the Department there was a crowd of carriages, and grave, solemn-looking men, wearing red rosettes, entered quietly, inscribed their names in the Register, and handed the pen to the next comer, much as they passed the sprinkler for holy water in the Church. They all parted as they saw Vaudrey approach, and it seemed to him that they realized that he was the man of the situation, the future President of the Council.

"Poor Collard!" thought Sulpice, as he wrote down his name. "We never heard of the Collard Ministry, but it is quite possible that History will have something to say, one of these days, about the Vaudrey Ministry!"

He went back to the Hôtel Beauvau full of this idea. In the anteroom there were even more petitioners than usual waiting for him. When Vaudrey entered, one among them hurried toward him.

"Ah! Monsieur Le Ministre! What a misfortune in Monsieur Collard's death! What should we do if there were not men like your Excellency to take his place?"

Vaudrey bowed but did not speak.

"What was that gentleman's name?" he asked of the clerk who followed him into his Cabinet. "I see him all the time, but I don't know him."

"Oh! sir, that is Monsieur Eugéne."

"Ah! to be sure—I remember."

Warcolier appeared with an air more sulky than sad. He held a letter in his hand, and twisted it about as he rolled off well rounded periods in regard to this shocking misfortune, this inopportune death, this dramatic exit of Monsieur Collard. Every few minutes as he talked, Warcolier looked down on the paper, which he was tumbling in his fingers in such an angry fashion that Vaudrey, much puzzled, finally asked him what the letter was.

"Don't speak of it!" said Warcolier. A fool—"

"What fool?"

"A fool I treated none too well the other morning."

"Ah! And what did this especial fool do?"

"He went away in a towering rage and wrote this letter to me. To me! the Assistant Secretary of State. Just listen to this. Was there ever anything half so foolish:

"*To the Secretary of State:*

"This is to inform your Excellency that you have in your employment an Assistant Secretary who has

been very badly brought up, and who will make you many enemies. As you are his superior, I desire to call your attention to his conduct," etc., etc.

"You laugh?" said Warcolier as he looked at Vaudrey, "but, really, it is no laughing matter. There is a constant crowd of people coming here—people who make the most unheard of demands, and are really good for nothing, discontented and exacting. And why are they discontented — what do they want? I have asked myself that question over and over again ever since I held my present position. Is it that the Ministry do not carry out the wishes of the majority? The Journalists keep up a perpetual complaint. They print the most disgusting things. We have demanded liberty but not license."

And while Warcolier gesticulated and orated as if before two thousand persons, Sulpice Vaudrey's thoughts wandered to the sad, sick face of this Garnier whom he had met at Ramel's — that heart-breaking antithesis of this perfectly contented person.

He wished to see Adrienne, and, still more, Marianne. What would the latter say when she learned of his promotion! Adrienne had certainly received the news coldly enough. "If you are pleased, I am," was all she said, and these words were uttered with a sigh.

It was precisely what she had said when her husband went, at the time of the formation of the Collard Cabinet, and said to her, "I am Ministre."

Adrienne was singularly unsympathetic, that was clear. Sulpice had begun, too, to think her too indifferent to the important matters of his life. Home intercourse and its joys ought not to render a woman blind to the public triumphs of her husband. He instinctively drew a comparison between this gentle blonde, with her resigned and passive air, and Marianne with her tawny tresses and her enthusiasm. He adored this woman more and more passionately with each day's rising sun. Vaudrey said to himself that a man in his situation, with his ambition and determination, would have found his power doubled, and his success ensured, by a creature with half the energy and intelligence of Mademoiselle Kayser. He had noticed the faint smile of superiority with which Marianne had regarded his wife one night at the theatre, and the next day Marianne, with her exquisite grace, had said to him, in an airy way:

"Do you know that Madame Vaudrey is charming?" He had flushed deeply under these blunt words and then turned deathly pale. Never until then had Marianne Kayser uttered Adrienne's name.

"You like blondes, I see!" said Marianne. "I have almost made up my mind to be jealous of her."

"Oblige me," interrupted Sulpice, "by never speaking of her. Let us talk about ourselves."

"Yes, she is altogether charming," continued Marianne, in a perfidiously protecting tone, "a little—a little *bourgeoise*, perhaps, but decidedly charming!"

She knew Vaudrey too well not to be thoroughly

aware of the sharpness of the blade she was using. "A little *bourgeoise*," she could have said nothing worse. This irritating verdict rendered by this Parisian, haunted Sulpice and gave him in his own eyes some shadowy excuse for his passion and misconduct.

"Pshaw!" he said to himself. "It is only a woman who can be guilty of misconduct. A man is simply guilty of caprice, of a love of adventure, a surprise of the senses. After all," he said, "What wrong have I done? Adrienne is no less beloved by me. I would gladly give my very life for her."

He overwhelmed her with presents, invented surprises to which she was profoundly indifferent, and which she acknowledged in a weary tone with a—

"You are too good, my friend."

He neither ruined her nor her children. Alas! she had no children. Adrienne should have been a mother. And Marianne?

No, not Marianne. Marianne was not born to sit by the side of a cradle and the fire—but a childless wife soon takes another name, she becomes a friend. No, he robbed his wife of nothing. He had taken neither his affection nor her fortune from her. The money lavished by Vaudrey in la Rue Prony was his own. It was the savings made by his old parents which he threw away in this lavish fashion.

Adrienne had no wish he did not gratify. This being the case, Vaudrey felt no remorse. He did not ask himself if his passion for Marianne would be likely to last, for it was not passion alone that he felt

for her now. Her boldness and originality, her spirited words, all excited his admiration.

What a counsellor, and what an ally such a woman would be!

When Vaudrey informed her that he was to be Prime Minister, Marianne instantly understood the new situation and the immense increase of influence. A flash of pleasure leaped into the gray eyes of Marianne Kayser.

She said to herself that she ought to take advantage of this hour of triumph.

"Is it Official?" she asked.

"Not yet, but it is certain."

What did Marianne hope or desire? She did not know herself, for she had no definite aim. She lay in wait for an occasion, however, and determined to gain something herself from Vaudrey's advancement. Claire Dujarrier, who had already been of so much use to her might give her some advice.

"Are you desirous of witnessing Collard's funeral?" asked Vaudrey.

Marianne began to laugh.

"Why should I wish to see it?" she demanded.

"Because it will be a most imposing spectacle. All the authorities, the magistrates, the Institute and the Garrison of Paris will be out."

"Do you think a procession an amusing thing? No.—They never interest me. You can tell me all about it, that will do just as well."

Vaudrey marched at the head of the cortège, which

went through la Place Vendôme and la Rue de Paris to the Madeleine. Troops stood in line, and from time to time the measured beat of drums muffled in crape was heard. The mortuary car was immense, with its masses of flowers and wreaths of immortelles, and as Sulpice with bowed head followed it, he was artist enough to be struck by the strange contrast of this pomp and ceremony to the once obscure life of this Nantes lawyer. He saw again the thin face of Garnier and Ramel's white moustache. Which of the two had best served the cause, Ramel vanquished, or Collard dying in the hour of triumph! He could not answer this question to his satisfaction.

He thought of it all through the ceremony. He thought of it while the organ played, and green flames darted over the incense burners, and while the clash of arms echoed from among the soldiers guarding the catafalque.

When the ceremonies were over, Granet, caressing his waxed moustache, went to Sulpice and said to him, with a sarcastic inflexion of the voice:

"Did you know that there was some talk of building a statue to Collard?"

"Truly?"

"Yes; because of the great example he has set."

"What example is that?"

"He is one of the very few of our Ministers who has died in office! Imitate him, my dear friend, but put it off as long as possible!"

Sulpice tried to laugh at Granet's jest; he did not

like the man nor his words, but he had no reason to be angry for they were civil enough.

Before he returned to his wife, Vaudrey drove to la Rue Prony. Jean, the servant, said that Madame was out. She was obliged to go to her uncle's. This did not surprise Sulpice, but as he was especially anxious to see Marianne, he drove to the painter's studio.

Uncle Kayser opened the door, and as soon as he saw the Minister began to cough loudly, either because of his surprise and gratification, or because he wished to warn some one.

"Is Mademoiselle Kayser here?" asked Sulpice.

"Yes; she is here. It is very odd, but one of our amateurs has just dropped in to see my pictures."

Vaudrey pushed open the door of the studio, and saw a young man, with a pale face and tawny beard, sitting close to Mademoiselle Kayser and holding her hand. Marianne rising quickly, but looking not in the least astonished, at once presented him:

"Monsieur José de Rosas!"

She had put in the mere tone in which she pronounced this name such an intense expression of victory, such a clash of arms and blast of bugles, that Vaudrey was wounded to his heart.

He remembered every word Marianne had said of this man.

He saluted Rosas with somewhat cold politeness, from Marianne's tone he at once understood that she did not wish the Spaniard to divine their relations.

She emphasized his title too strongly, and repeated too often "*Monsieur Le Ministre.*" She had, moreover, a singular fashion of turning away her eyes when Vaudrey sought to meet them, and of avoiding any especial conversation with him; while, on the contrary, she addressed Rosas with great interest, asking him what he had done in London, whom and what he had seen, and what news he had brought.

"None, whatever," answered José, with a singular expression which, for some reason, was very displeasing to Vaudrey. "The conviction that Paris is the only place in which to live, and that there are persons whom one ought to avoid, and yet to whom one constantly returns, prevents one from feeling much interest in any other place."

Vaudrey caught a triumphant gleam in Marianne's eyes, and vaguely discerned in this commonplace sentence uttered by Rosas something more than met the ear. The Spaniard's voice trembled as he spoke.

Marianne listened with a smile.

"You have made another journey, Monsieur?" asked Sulpice, hardly knowing what he said.

"Oh, no! not a journey—a mere trip to London!"

"Have you been in Paris long?"

"I arrived only this morning."

And his first visit had been to Simon Kayser's atélier where he hoped to meet Marianne.

She gave Sulpice to understand that she and Rosas had met by the merest chance, but this he doubted and watched her with angry suspicion.

He instinctively felt that Rosas had come to dispute with him this prize.

She divined all this and interrupted Sulpice before he could form a sentence, and with exaggerated respect seemed eager to show Rosas the friendship she felt for the Minister and her pride in it.

"By the way, my dear Minister, have you yet received your nomination as President of the Council?"

Vaudrey frowned.

"I beg ten thousand pardons for mentioning a State secret, but Monsieur Rosas will not betray it, I am quite sure."

Rosas bowed. Vaudrey felt himself becoming very impatient.

"Madame Vaudrey," Marianne resumed, "must be enchanted at this nomination."

She smiled at Sulpice, who was greatly astonished at hearing Adrienne's name; then, turning toward Rosas, she painted an idyllic picture of the affection cherished by Monsieur Le Ministre for Madame Vaudrey. It was a model household, and, really, when you came to think of it, why should it not be, Monsieur Le Ministre was so amiable and Madame Vaudrey so charming!

Sulpice was very pale, as he endeavored to discover the explanation of this enigma. He asked himself what Marianne was trying to do.

Monsieur de Rosas sat motionless—very silent and very cold.

He had hardly opened his lips since Vaudrey entered the studio.

Marianne, smiling and happy, with radiant eyes, questioned Vaudrey, and tried to give this unexpected meeting between these two men some cordiality and some common point of meeting.

"Was there a great crowd at the funeral? Who had sung at the church?" Vaudrey answered these questions, but his thoughts were evidently far away.

After waiting a few moments longer, the Spaniard rose from his chair and saluted Marianne with his most courteous bow.

"Are you going, then, Duc?"

"Yes. I have seen you once more, and you are well, and I am satisfied."

"But you will come again, I trust? My uncle has some new studies to show you."

"Yes, some glorious ideas," began Kayser. "Things which would make famous frescoes. For a palace or for the Pantheon, just which you please!"

He had been watching the Duc and Vaudrey, first one and then the other.

Rosas saluted Vaudrey and departed; he was followed to the ante-room by Kayser and by Marianne, who, as soon as the door was closed behind her, snatched his hand and holding it firmly in her warm, nervous grasp, said, in a low, breathless voice:

"You will come back, I am sure! I implore you to do so! It was a cruel thing in you to take flight as you did. Promise to come back!"

She entreated and ordered in the same breath. Rosas did not reply, but she was [illegible] the curtain by the pres-

sure of his hand that she should see him again ere long; and now that he had returned to Paris, merely because he was weary of living far from her, why should she not take full possession of him? All this was said in one rapid glance and in a pressure of the hand.

Rosas hurried away as if he hardly knew where he was going. Marianne made a sign to her uncle not to follow her, and went back to the atélier.

Vaudrey had risen from the divan where he had been sitting, and stood awaiting her return.

"You told me that you dismissed Monsieur de Rosas."

"I did tell you so, and it is true."

"You nevertheless smiled on him to-day?"

"Yes—you are right."

"What! A man who asked you to become his friend?"

"And whom I sent from me, yes!"

She looked at Sulpice with her pretty, inexplicable smile.

"Then you love this man?"

"I? Not in the least! But it flatters me to see him come back like a little boy who has been punished!"

"I do not understand—"

"Because you are not a woman! That is the reason. It is mortifying to our vanity to see people who take their dismissals too promptly and too easily. Monsieur de Rosas comes back to me, which proves that he was really wounded and naturally I triumph!"

"And the evident joy I saw in your eyes?"

"Was on account of the return of Rosas to Paris."

"And yet you do not love him! Tell me," said Vaudrey, taking Marianne's hands in his, "tell me that you do not love him!"

"I do not love him the least in the world!" she said, laughing.

"And you love me?"

"Yes—I love you!"

"Marianne, it would be base in you were you to deceive me. It would have been far better, if you had never loved me, if you intend to throw me over now."

"That is to say, that one ought never to lend any money unless one intends to give the whole of one's fortune!" she answered.

He was not pleased with Marianne's irony, nor was he satisfied with the manner in which she looked at him—her tone and her eyes were bewildering and unsatisfactory.

"Do not let us talk any more in this foolish way," she said. "I repeat that I am glad to see Monsieur de Rosas again, because his return is a balm to my vanity. Beyond that I do not care one sou whether he comes back or stays away. He has made the *amende honorable*, and that is all I care for! And you, my friend, had best lay aside your jealousy, for I consider the rôle of Othello very stupid. Besides, you have no right to treat me as if I were Desdemona—the law is against it!"

"You mean to remind me that I am married. Why do you like to harass me with these pin pricks?"

"Pin pricks! Is it harassing you when I allude to your home?"

"Why did you mention my wife in the presence of Monsieur de Rosas?"

"Ah!" cried Marianne, "why is that you can never understand anything? It was for your sake—for your sake alone—and to explain the presence in my uncle's studio of a Minister who is supposed to be an absolute Puritan. Did you wish me to tell him that you were false to your wife, and came here to see me? Perhaps you would have liked that better?"

"Yes, of course!" answered Vaudrey, vehemently.

"Ah!" said Marianne, placing her little hand on his lips, where he held it, "would you like me to cry our secret aloud to the world—"

"I would like," he said, passionately kissing her fingers and palm, "that all the world knew that you were mine—mine alone. And this man?"

His eyes finished the sentence.

Marianne shrugged her shoulders.

"Let Monsieur de Rosas alone, and come home with me, to our home," she said with tender voice and eyes as tender.

"You do not love him?"

"No."

"And you love me?"

"I have told you so over and over again. How do you think you would feel were I to stand up some fine day in the Assembly and shout these words aloud?"

"I should prefer that to losing you, and to know that you do not love me!"

"I honestly believe the simpleton is telling the truth!" and Marianne laughed.

"Yes, the absolute, positive truth!"

He drew her toward him as the two sat on the shabby divan, and with his arm around her beautiful waist he bent his head to kiss her, but Marianne drew back and took his face between her soft hands. Contemplating him with a strange smile, she said:

"You are not over wise, Sulpice!"

CHAPTER XII.

A CASTILIAN DUC.

JOSÉ DE ROSAS believed himself to be much more his own master than he really was.

This man of iron will had supposed that distance would enable him to forget Marianne, or arm him against her. He now found himself, on the contrary, more than ever possessed by this woman, and more than ever tortured by her haunting eyes and enigmatic smile. Her image was ever present, not only in the watches of the night, but all day long. No matter where he went he was followed by her ghost—the ghost of a living woman, whose kiss still burned on his lips like a living coal. A ghost which he could take in his arms! This man, who was accustomed to the half savage life of a trapper, turned to Marianne—as to a living incarnate hope.

José felt if he came to Paris that it would be in spite of himself and that he must devote his life to this woman, and yet he came back. His first visit, before he had been in Paris for twelve hours, was to the place where he knew he could find some clue to Marianne. Under the coldness of his reserved manner and face, were concealed the most violent passions, and he threw all thought and hesitation to the winds, and determined

to reflect no more. He had had something of the same feeling when, on the other side of the world, his canoe had shot over the rapids.

Marianne felt that it would never do to let him find her established in her new quarters. She might, to be sure, invent some plausible tale—she might say "this brief luxury recalled my former extravagances when I received and spent my legacy from my grandmother."

She had indulged in this flight of imagination before, when obliged to account for the money which had come to her from Lissac, and Rosas had believed her. But now, she felt that José was both suspicious and jealous, and that it was incumbent upon her to manage him with judicious care.

She knew perfectly well that did she receive the Duc in Vanda's Hôtel he would see no difference between her and other women with whom he had amused himself and enriched during his fleeting passion. This luxury might impress Sulpice Vaudrey, but it would have had a very different effect on Rosas. That which whetted the appetite of the provincial *bourgeois* palled upon the taste and nauseated a man who had seen so much of it.

As soon as Rosas came back, her plan of campaign was at once organized. She did not wish to receive him in Vanda's Hôtel, as we have said, and implored him, since he was determined to see her, to do so in her own home. She meant by that the room in la Rue Cuvier, far from the noise of Paris, near the Jardin des

Plantes. She told him that no one but herself ever crossed her threshold. Directions were issued in advance to her uncle, if Rosas should reappear, Simon was to send instantly to his niece and prevent him from learning Marianne's address. This was accordingly done, and after this first interview Rosas was to see Marianne only in la Rue Cuvier.

He felt the most vivid gratitude to this creature who thus frankly delivered up the secret of her soul, and allowed him to enter the place where she lived with her dead Past, her thoughts of what had been, possibly cheered by thoughts of what might be. Marianne had rightly read him. This mystery added a new fascination to the feeling which Rosas already entertained for her.

The first time he entered the little home where Simon Kayser's niece awaited him, he was violently agitated. "Here," he said to himself, "does this poor creature, wounded and torn in the battle of life, eager for rest and solitude, spend her best hours among her books." He looked around the simple apartment; it was that of some poor teacher who had arranged her few belongings with taste, and Rosas felt a certain respect for all he saw and all that was indicated.

Marianne was just what he believed her to be, superior to her destiny, living an intellectual life, consoling herself for the disappointments she had undergone, with the dreams of poets in this retreat she had devised, where she could throw off her mask and be as sad as she pleased—and she was so often sad!

She had told Rosas the name by which she was known there.

"Mademoiselle Robert."

He looked a little startled.

"Yes—I do not wish that any one should know anything about me. You ought to understand the need of forgetfulness and repose which certain natures feel! There was one of your sóvereigns who slept in his own coffin night after night, was there not? Well, then, I have something of his feelings, and when I push the bolt of my little room in la Rue Cuvier, I shiver with delight. Do not breathe my secret to any one. The world is very curious, and so stupid!"

Marianne seemed more strange and more seductive to Rosas than ever before. All this commonplace romance and mystery in which she shrouded herself interested him greatly, and in this little room, where she was only Mademoiselle Robert, she became to him more and more charming, as attractive as a problem—a veritable Parisian sphinx!

He loved her profoundly and respectfully, while she, understanding him and reading him thoroughly, risked no imprudence, knowing very well that if she gave herself too quickly, it would no longer be a woman who fell into the arms of the Duc, but an idol who descended from her pedestal.

She had come to love him for the very respect he felt for her. She was not accustomed to it. Each masculine look that had been fixed upon her since her

childhood had said, before the lips had spoken, "You are beautiful! You please me!"

Rosas, however, had said: "I love you"—before, "I must have you!"

Exasperated at times by his reserve, she nevertheless found him superior to any one else, as well as different. That was, in itself, quite enough to make her love him. One day she said to him, with her bewildering smile and in a half indifferent tone:

"Do you know one thing which I never would have believed had it been told to me, but which I have discovered for myself? You are timid."

He turned a little pale.

"A love that is sincere is always timid."

"Perhaps," answered Marianne.

Their conversations were always on the subject of love. Rosas talked of his passion openly.

She asked him once if he would despise a woman who would become his mistress.

"No," he said smiling. "It is only a Frenchman who feels contempt for the woman who gives herself to him. Other nations treat love more seriously. They do not regard the gift of one's self as a degradation."

Marianne looked him full in the face.

"Then if I loved you enough for that—"

"I should esteem you enough to become your husband!"

She felt the color rush to her face.

What did these words mean? Was de Rosas trifling with her? Had he reflected on what he had just said?

José continued, in a gentle tone:

"Will you allow me to ask one question, Marianne?"

"You can ask as many as you choose, and I will answer them with the utmost frankness."

"Why did Monsieur Sulpice come to your uncle's the other day? To see you?"

Marianne smiled.

"The Minister came only to speak of matters of business. I see him at the studio occasionally. My uncle hopes to obtain a commission from him. You heard him allude to it, if I am not mistaken."

"Is Vaudrey interested in you?"

After a fashion, I dare say, but he loves his wife and he knows very well that I love no one."

"No one?" asked Rosas.

"No one as yet," said Marianne, as she opened her eyes wide under the eager gaze of the Spainard. From this moment a new hope had taken possession of her whole nature. When Rosas had reappeared she had seen in him only a possible lover. Mistress of a Minister, she meant to become the mistress of a Duc who was a millionaire. She gained by the change, and moreover she intended to retain them both. Her calculations had been in a measure frustrated by the unexpected dilatoriness shown by Rosas.

But now he, with the imprudence of a swordsman who uncovers himself before the foil of the adversary who has intentionally provoked him, allowed her to detect the length to which his passion would lead him.

"Fool that I am!" said Marianne to herself. "Why do I not play for higher stakes!"

She shrugged her shoulders.

Married! A Duchess! and Duchess of Rosas. She laughed aloud when she was alone. Let my readers think of it a little. Pierre Meran, a thorough rascal, had carried her off, and a few months later died after throwing Marianne Kayser on the world. And now there was a possibility of her becoming a Duchess.

"It would be too droll!" she said aloud.

Never had Vaudrey, whom she saw that evening in la Rue Prony seemed to her so provincial. He was moreover dull and out of spirits. He did not at first explain why, but finally admitted to Marianne that he was embarrassed by the near approach of the date at which his note matured. She did not even remember what he meant.

"No, I know nothing about it."

"The note I gave to that Gochard!"

"Ah, to be sure! Ah, well, if you cannot pay it, I will see what—"

But no, he did not wish her to interfere. It was only that he did not dare to mortgage his farm at Saint Laurent du Pont. He had reflected that Adrienne must know if he should do this.

Marianne interrupted these confidences.

"Don't talk to me of these money affairs, my friend. You know how I hate them."

"I beg your pardon," he replied.

They were to meet the next day.

"What delight it will be to see you without being tied down to hours, to have one whole day free to pass with you!" murmured Vaudrey.

That night Marianne scarcely closed her eyes. She thought constantly of that grandee of Spain, who had said to her simply and quietly, "I should esteem you enough to make you my wife."

Vaudrey, in spite of the anticipated happiness of the next day—a long tête-à-tête with the woman he loved—was greatly troubled at the approach of the date, which had been once postponed, when he must pay the one hundred thousand francs for which he had given his note.

"It is astonishing how quickly time passes!" he said to himself.

Adrienne at breakfast the next morning found her husband more than usually pre-occupied.

"Are your political matters going wrong?"

"No, quite the contrary."

"Then why are you so sad?"

"I am a little tired."

"Then," said Madame Vaudrey, "you will scold me, I fear."

"And why?"

"Because I allowed Madame Gerson—you know her, she is Madame Marsy's friend—I almost promised to go to her to-night—she gives a dinner."

Vaudrey nearly lost his temper.

An evening lost! Hours stolen from Marianne!

"I am sorry!" murmured Adrienne, as she laid her

pretty head half sadly on her husband's breast. "It is such a pleasure to me to spend a whole evening with you, even if others are present. You have so many official demands and banquets, so many invitations where you go alone, that when I am invited with you I am delighted. Don't scold me, then, for saying that we would go to Madame Gerson's. She is very charming too. She says such nice things about you. Do you know what she calls you? Another Colbert!"

Vaudrey could not help smiling.

"After that, of course we must go," he said, as he kissed his wife's brow; it is like the 'My Lord,' of a beggar. And when did you say we were to dine with Madame Gerson?"

"To-night, and I shall have at least one whole evening when I can look at you," answered his wife gently.

The Minister entered his Cabinet, and almost immediately a card was brought in. "*Molina, Banker.*"

"How odd!" thought Sulpice. "I was thinking of him!"

This was quite true, for Vaudrey, whenever he was especially harassed by the recollection of the Gochard note, invariably thought of this stout, omnipotent man who laughed and talked so loudly in the *Foyer* at the Opera House, and whom he had seen lifting the dainty chin of Marie Launay. This man could aid him, if he chose, for what was the sum of a hundred thousand francs to this rich Banker?

Solomon Molina entered the Minister's Cabinet as he entered the *Foyer* at the Opera House, with his corpulent stomach thrown forward and his head thrown back.

"Monsieur Le Ministre," he said, in his loud, clear voice, as he settled himself in the chair pointed out by Vaudrey, "I assure you that this is the first time in my life that I ever entered a Minister's Cabinet." He delighted to affirm his independence—born of his colossal power. This man, who in his youth had, as a merchant at Marseilles, often stood at his shop door and invited in the sailors of the port and Maltese workmen, to induce them to purchase an overcoat or a pair of pantaloons. Within the dingy depths of his dark shop he had then dreamed of the joys and the triumphs imparted by the possession of money, had always preserved the recollection of these bad days, and on his red Jewish lips there was often even now a bitter smile as he thought of them. But triumphant and obese, powerful and flattered, he displayed in Paris both his enormous corpulence and enormous wealth. He pervaded the whole theatre and filled up his calêche on race days. He held in the leash, so to speak, the whole Parisian quarry that bounded and barked around the money and the power which were his. These men, the Directors of the Public Funds, bankers and journalists, each and all had enterprises to push, and he distributed to this little world a crumb here and a crumb there with the malicious delight of a prosperous parvenu, often feigning illness that he might keep

his room for the pleasure of hearing distinguished persons clamor vainly at his door for admittance.

He enjoyed his power in every fibre of his being, and after having housed himself all day with neuralgia, which came and went at his will, he dressed and appeared in some salon where he was sure to say:

"I had my neuralgia, to-day. The Minister of France came to see me. Baron Nathan sent to see how I was."

The man's greatest joy was found in crushing to the earth those unfortunates who, in more prosperous days, had shown utter indifference to his millions. He took his revenge whenever and wherever he could. There was no tender, pitiful spot in the heart of this big man, whose laugh was so hearty; his fat fingers would strangle you quite as readily as the thin ones of a usurer. Molina never forgave.

If he came to see the Minister it was because he had something to ask.

But what?

It was a most extraordinary thing, but Molina never felt comfortable with Vaudrey. There was something so unpleasantly frank and straightforward in the expression of the Minister's face, that the Banker, accustomed as he was to scoundrels and dishonesty, hardly knew how to broach the matter on which he had come.

"And yet, it is a splendid thing!" said Molina to himself.

It was a railroad matter—a concession to obtain, an affair of private interests dissimulated under the great

phrases of Public good, of National needs. There were millions in it. Molina was charged with the duty of feeling the pulse of the Council and the Minister of Public Works. The great thing was to make them swallow the thing under the color of patriotism, and regard it as a railroad that would be essential in time of war, a means of rapid transit. These statements and a few big words like strategy, frontiers and public safety, would put the thing through.

Unfortunately, Vaudrey was ticklish on these especial questions, and also well informed in regard to them. He felt a little ripple, a cold shiver pass over his skin as Molina spoke. When he saw the Banker's card, the idea of the money, of which the stout Banker was the incarnation, came to him like an inspiration. Who knows?—he might, perhaps, with Molina's aid, manage this Gochard note. But he at once saw that Molina was intimidated, and Vaudrey divined the truth under his hesitating words.

Could it be possible that Molina hesitated? Yes, because the coldness of the Minister's eyes kept him at a distance. When the Banker uttered the word Bourse, a disdainful smile passed over Vaudrey's lips, but not one word escaped them. Molina heard only his own voice in that Ministerial Cabinet, and he almost stammered. He had come to propose a combination, a division of spoils, and he did not doubt that Vaudrey would be glad "to be in it." And now, this devil of a Minister pretended not to understand, perhaps did not understand, or understood too well!

Molina was totally unaccustomed to such hardness of hearing. He had with his own huge hand placed in the palm of Senators and Excellencies of the Ancien Regime more than one sum for which a smile alone was the receipt; he had a way of talking in covert words, of conveying his meaning in a hand-shake which left a bit of paper behind them. And now, this Vaudrey would not understand! He was obliged to explain in plain terms, to dot every i, and run the risk of being put out of doors.

Molina was extremely disgusted. The perspiration stood on his brow in beads, so great was his effort to seek such words and terms as would convey his idea, and yet not convey it too broadly. "Was there ever such a thing known before—an insignificant lawyer from Grenoble managing me, Molina!" said the Banker to himself. "I shall have my revenge, however," he said to himself, as he left the Cabinet. "You will not be Minister forever, young man, and you shall pay well for this last fifteen minutes."

Vaudrey had understood the whole affair, but he did not choose to allow it to be seen that he did. It was the easiest way of settling the matter. He did not care to dismiss the man with the open contempt he deserved; he had enjoyed Molina's embarrassment, however. "If I had only spoken to him about the money before he let me see what he wanted! If I had accepted his offers of assistance!

He caught his breath, for he saw how great had been his peril. The merest imprudence would have put him

in the power of this man. But it was necessary to come to some decision, for the days were passing rapidly, and the notes would be presented for payment very shortly.

"And to think that this Molina could put me in the way of quadrupling this money in one day!" Solomon had said to him: "The announcement of a piece of news at the Bourse is worth untold sums occasionally, and the man who tells it deserves a prize?" What Molina intended to convey was that the revelation of a State secret was worth a large amount of money. And at these words, dissimulating an insult as they did, he had not rung for a *huissier* to show out the Banker. The man had left behind him an odor of corruption.

Vaudrey was soon reassured in regard to the Gochard note. He perceived, on going to see Marianne, that she was "very sensible." She informed him that Claire Dujarrier, whom she had seen, had obtained from this Gochard, whom Vaudrey did not know, a renewal of the note for six months, with a charge of twenty thousand francs for each term of sixty days.

"I did not precisely understand," Marianne began to say.

"Oh! it is clear to me," said Sulpice; "I understand it all. It is usury, to its full extent, but time is of the greatest importance to me, and it will be easier for me to pay twice the amount then than a hundred thousand to-day. I have several plans in my head."

"What are they?"

"Oh! they are too vague to explain, I am afraid, but the first thing is to postpone the day.

"That is simple enough. Madame Dujarrier will attend to that."

"Is Madame Dujarrier a Providence, then?

"Pretty nearly," answered Marianne, coldly.

Sulpice was intoxicated with joy when Marianne gave him his old note, and he signed a new one for one hundred and forty thousand francs. He had nearly seven months in which to arrange to pay it, and he said to himself, gayly: "Oh! this can be done!"

He went back to the Hôtel Beauvau in excellent spirits. Adrienne was delighted. She had dreaded seeing him come in low spirited and nervous.

"Then you will be at your best to-night at Madame Gerson's?"

"Ah! to be sure. This is the evening, is it?"

He had forgotten.

Marianne was not free. She was going, she said, to Auteul, to settle the matter of the note definitely. Vaudrey therefore no longer regretted the evening, and was perfectly willing to go to the dinner.

"I am perfectly happy!" cried Adrienne, clapping her hands like a child.

While undressing, Vaudrey happened to find this note, which he had folded in four and placed in his vest pocket:

"I promise to pay on June 1st, to the order of

Monsieur Adolphe Gochard, residing in Rue Altriny, No. 9, the sum of one hundred thousand francs, value received.

"SULPICE VAUDREY,
"Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, 37."

He became livid as he read it. If Adrienne had seen it!

He burned the paper at a candle.

"I am the most imprudent man in the world!" he said. "Poor child! I would not cause her a pang!"

She was in the best of spirits as they drove from the Ministerial Residence to the Hôtel Gerson. She had at least a few minutes of happy solitude with her husband.

"Do you remember when we drove away the evening of our marriage?" she said to him softly, as the carriage rolled rapidly on.

He pressed her hand.

"You love me still, Sulpice. You know that I love you better than any one else in the world, do you not?"

"Yes, I believe it."

"You would kill me were I to deceive you, but I, alas! what should I do were you to deceive me? When I think that you whom I love so dearly, may love some other woman—"

"My child! are you mad," said Sulpice, "you said this once before to me. Here we are."

Madame Gerson had filled her house with flowers, and lighted it from top to bottom, in order to receive

the President of the Council. But her Hôtel was very tiny and it was packed to overflowing. She had beaten the roll call of all her friends, for she had resolved to create a new salon, a salon which should demonstrate to Madame Marsy that she was not Madame Evan's only rival.

Madame Gerson was not on terms with Sabine Marsy. No one knew why, and Adrienne, who was entirely out of these petty quarrels, was greatly astonished to hear it.

"She says we take all her adherents from her," said Madame Gerson. "It is not my fault if she is amused at our house. I hope you will be equally gratified Monsieur le President."

Vaudrey bowed. "Could Madame Gerson doubt it?"

Dinner was announced. Madame Gerson fluttered in on the arm of the Minister. Guy de Lissac, Warcolier, several senators and deputies were of the party. Neither Monsieur nor Madame Gerson addressed them by name, but always by their titles.

Sulpice always felt in this house where everything was sacrified to *chic*, as if he were on exhibition. He always had more or less of this feeling when he dined in this circle; there was precisely the same conversation and the same men.

Monsieur Gerson tried to make the President of the Council talk politics. He wished to know Vaudrey's opinion on some important subject.

Sulpice laughed.

"Ah!" he said, "I know nothing on any subject,

to-night. I prefer these truffles; they are exquisite in flavor."

Adrienne looked at her husband, whom she could see through the flowers in the basket on the centre of the table. She talked only with Guy de Lissac, who sat on her right; *les convénances* would naturally have placed either the Senator Crepeau there, or the Deputy Monsieur de Prangins. But Madame Gerson said, with a faint smile, that Madame Vaudrey would not be sorry to have Monsieur de Lissac for a neighbor. "I have often met Monsieur de Lissac at the Minister's. They like him extremely, there."

Not knowing a soul at the table, Adrienne was delighted to find Lissac at her side. He pleased her by his lively sallies, his gay fault finding, and his feigned skepticism under which was concealed far more faith and heart than he wished to have appear.

And he had long admired her frankness, her charming candor. She was so utterly different from any other woman he had ever known. It was a mystery to him how Vaudrey could neglect a creature so perfect, who was more attactive from her virtue that all the world, or the demi-world could give. That Vaudrey's relations with his wife were cold, any one could see with half an eye. A keen and experienced observer like Guy could not be mistaken on that point. Madame Vaudrey never complained, but it was evident that she suffered. Was it politics alone that took Vaudrey from his wife, or had some woman robbed Adrienne of her husband? Guy did not

know, but he determined to find out, for this pretty Madame Vaudrey interested him very deeply.

"If that idiot of a Sulpice were not my friend, I should certainly devote myself to her!" he said to himself while he gazed into Adrienne's limpid eyes. "I should gain nothing, however, for there are lakes that cannot be disturbed, so pure are the sources from which they are fed!"

Adrienne asked him the name of each guest. On the left of Madame Gerson sat a small man with black hair cut very short, long, mutton-chop whiskers, a fresh color and quick eyes: this was Monsieur Jouvénet, once a lawyer, now the Prefect of Police.

Further off was Senator Crépeau, a hard-working man, whose *specialite* was figures.

"He eats well," said Lissac. "His appetite is better than his eloquence."

Next Crépeau was another Legislator, Henri de Prangins, a discontented, grumbling publicist.

"Ah! there is Monsieur de Prangins, I have often heard him speak," said Adrienne.

"He is a type," answered Lissac, smiling. "You know Granet, the man who will be a Minister? well, Prangins is the man who has wished to be for years, but will never succeed in his hopes. And yet he is a hundred times more remarkable than a hundred others who have, to the astonishment of every one, been successful."

For almost half a century Prangins had busied himself with politics; he had built up and demolished

Ministers, written folios for the journals, contradictions on contradictions. He was popular and wealthy, and therefore surrounded by flatterers. Without friends but not without clients, having made and unmade reputations and governments, he had learned at last that an existence of popularity is not worth an hour of that power, which he saw evade his eager grasp just as he thought his fingers were upon it.

He was feared, undoubtedly, and looked upon as a *force*, but was himself conscious that after sacrificing his youth, his family and his friends to his thirst for power, he had awakened from his dreams to find himself worn out in the harness and discouraged before the failure of all his hopes and the utter impotence of his will. Never had his strong, nervous hands been able to grasp the smallest corner of a portfolio, and it was not now when they were trembling and almost senile, that he could hope to hold the prize he had so long coveted. And therefore this Prangins, eager to avenge himself for the disdain and injustice of his colleagues, criticised their every act, grumbling and finding fault in all directions. A favorite remark of his, which he now repeated in loud tones, was the following: "The fault of almost all governments is to try and play new airs on an old violin! Your violin is cracked, Monsieur Vaudrey! You are not to blame for this, however, since it was not you who manufactured it!"

Vaudrey laughed, but Warcolier was almost suffocated with rage. How could the Minister permit

his politics to be attacked in this way at a dinner party!

Madame Gerson was greatly delighted. The dinner was magnificent and faultlessly served. The Maitre d'Hôtel managed the whole affair admirably. It would certainly be spoken of in the journals. Gerson had invited a reporter, though he held all journalists in utter detestation.

"These newspapers," he said, with feigned anger, "talk of my wife as if she were an actress. The beautiful Madame Gerson in her robe of *crêpe de Chine!* The beautiful Madame Gerson, indeed! What business is it of theirs, either the beauty or the toilette of my wife!"

In reality, he was immensely flattered, and only angry when the wall of private life, the cement of which he had himself loosened, was respected by these same journalists. To be mentioned in the newspapers he regarded as *chic.*

Adrienne was almost stunned by the din of conversation which increased as the dinner advanced. Madame Gerson began to talk, so that all could hear, of Madame Marsy, at whose house she had made the acquaintance of Vaudrey, and in a very graceful, easy way, soon made mincemeat of her former friend. She related, with an air of gentle indulgence, anecdotes which had often been whispered. She told the story of Philippe Marsy's lonely death and of a certain escapade of Sabine with Emile Cordier, one of the heads of the New School in Art.

"Can it be possible that you never knew this?" said Madame Gerson, with an air of great surprise.

No, Adrienne knew nothing, and was thankful for her ignorance. She heard her hostess say that this former friend, Sabine, had sent several pictures of her own to the Salon. Such horrors as they were! Perhaps, however, Cordier had retouched them afterward.

"I thought Madame Gerson was on the best of terms with Madame Marsy," said Adrienne in a low voice to Lissac, who replied:

"They have been, and will I dare say be friends again. It does not matter which, women either tear each other to pieces, or embrace each other!"

Adrienne determined to hear no more. She knew Sabine Marsy very slightly, and made no pretence of friendship for her, but this wholesale execution made with smiles by a woman who so recently had done the honors in the Boulevard Malesherbes struck her as the most outrageous treachery. Was this society! How wise she had been in preferring solitude!

Then, in order not to hear these slurs from the lips of persons who had crowded around Madame Marsy's buffet the day before, and would do the same to-morrow, she began to talk with Lissac. She said to him artlessly that she was very dreary in the Place Beauvau. She spoke of Sulpice because he was the one she loved best in the whole world, and because he was continually in her mind and heart.

"I almost never see him! Just think of that. Last week he spent two days at Laon, where there was some kind of an exposition."

"An exposition at Laon?" asked Lissac in astonishment; "what was it?"

"I have not the smallest idea. I ought to feel more interest in these things I suppose, but they bore me to death. I detest politics and newspapers, I hear so much about them. My uncle, Dr. Réboux, used to say to me, 'Never marry a physician, he is only half a husband.' Vaudrey is worse than a physician, for he is so constantly kept out by these night sessions."

"Night sessions!" repeated Lissac.

"Yes, at the Chamber, you know."

Guy did his best to restrain any evidence of astonishment, but he knew now without the possibility of further doubt that Sulpice neglected Adrienne, probably for some opera singer or ballet dancer, some applicant at the Department who had fascinated the Minister. He was disgusted with Sulpice, and looked from him to Adrienne. Such a thorough woman, so perfectly lovely, with every feature perfect. Vaudrey was an idiot!

They rose from the table, and as usual, the men went into the smoking room, leaving the salon half empty. Madame Gerson took advantage of this to continue her laughing narration of Sabine's follies. The men talked over their cigars, and above all other voices came Warcolier's clear ringing tones.

Guy, sitting in a corner on a divan in the smoking room, continued to think of Adrienne, and of the night sessions to which she had so innocently alluded, and of the expositions invented by Sulpice. Occasionally a

phrase or two dropped by the other men reached his ears.

"You know how Badiche heard of his defeat at the last elections?"

"No, how was that?"

He went home in great suspense as to the result, and he heard his two children—little things, a boy and a girl—singing a song they had composed on the arrival of a telegram which their mother had hastily opened.

'Result no longer negative.
Balloting quite positive.
And we are all sad, all,
For Badiche has gone to the wall!'

"Was there ever such terrible children?"

"Quite worthy of Gavarni."

"By the way, President, on what majority can you count?"

"On 139!"

"That is a good many."

"I do not rely, my dear fellow,"—it was old Prangins who was speaking—"I do not rely on being the next Minister. No! I do not delude myself, I assure you. But I shall be the second, or rather the third. No, the fourth, very possibly. Yes, I am sure of being the fourth Minister."

An asthmatic cough, the cough of a decrepid old man cut his words short.

Guy heard Warçolier say, as he stood with a glass of korsch in his hand:

"I have one way of managing my electors. Not only when I go to see them do I call them 'my friend,' and 'my dear fellow,' which flatters them immensely, but I occasionally send them autograph letters. Many of them are so flattered that they go about saying, 'he is not proud.' Others who are more suspicious, say, 'I have his signature, at all events!'"

"How, after elections, we laugh at the men whose boots we were quite ready to black *before*," thought Lissac.

"My method is a simple one," said another. "I want to be Sub-Préfect as the next step to being Préfect, and afterward Deputy, in order to become Receiver-General—the salary of that office is good, and but little to do."

"He is frank, upon my word," thought Guy again.

"I read very little," Crépeau was saying to Warcolier, "I am not very fond of light literature. We political men need stronger food, something to teach us to think."

"I believe you!" murmured Guy. "You had best go to school again, my man."

The buzz of conversation increased and Guy, blasé as he was, became profoundly disgusted at the selfishness he descried. He shook his head as he listened, and said to himself: "If Universal Suffrage could only hear!"

Lissac did not mingle in these conversations. He listened as usual. In fact he enjoyed nothing so much. It was his great amusement to sit a little apart and look on at the drama of society.

He was about to rise and join Vaudrey, when the Minister instinctively turned to him on the approach of Monsieur Jouvénet, the Prefect of Police, who stood between the Minister and Guy. Jouvénet spoke in a low voice to Vaudrey, accompanying his words with an equivocal smile, all the time fingering his moustache. Low as was the Prefect's tones, Guy was near enough to hear the name of Mademoiselle Kayser.

Marianne! How could there be any question of Marianne between these two men.

Lissac noticed that Vaudrey had turned very pale.

He went toward his friend and stood at a table just behind the Minister, apparently occupied with a cup of coffee.

He heard these words distinctly:

"A reporter saw you come out of her house, the other night!"

Guy moved rapidly away. He felt almost dazed with the shock, he felt too, as if the Prefect's words had been the natural consequence of his conversation with Adrienne—a rapid response.

He knew the truth now; he would simply interrogate Vaudrey. And when Jouvénet, with a low and courteous salute, had left the Minister in evident dis quiet, Guy went up to him.

"You know Mademoiselle Kayser intimately then, do you?" he asked, and Vaudrey, much startled, looked at him in amazement, without at first even trying to understand what Lissac meant.

"Am I indiscreet?" asked Guy.

"No; but who told you?"

"No one. Your Prefect of Police simply spoke too loudly, that is all."

Vaudrey grasped Lissac's hand.

"Hush! not another word!" he said.

"Very good. Poor little Adrienne!" answered Lissac.

"I will tell you all about it later. It is a very simple thing, not in the least what you think."

"Oh! of course not!" said Guy, turning away mechanically, and almost as if to escape his friend.

Sulpice left the smoking-room, saying, as he did so, to the other men:

"We ought to join the ladies. Tobacco kills conversation."

Vaudrey uttered this platitude almost unwittingly. He was very uncomfortable. It was the first time that Jouvénet had told him that there were agents whose duties it was to discover what the Minister did. The Prefect of Police had by accident, at a dinner the day before, prevented the statement going into the papers that a Minister was involved in an intrigue in la Rue de Prony. Vaudrey's name might as well have been printed in long letters.

Until the present time he had supposed it possible to love Marianne without scandal, and in the shade. His secret now belonged to the police, to the whole world, to a reporter who had knocked against him as he hurried down the street on his way to sup with some *fille* in the neighborhood.

The Minister was intensely annoyed, and the feminine flutter and murmured applause that greeted him as he re-entered the salon could not dissipate his ill-humor. He tried to talk, and to reply to Madame Gerson's witicisms, but he was nervous and ill at ease. Adrienne looked at him with anxiety. It seemed to her that he was suffering. The conversation was pretentious and at the same time light; the salon was second-rate in the sense that no original ideas of men and things ever emanated from there. On the contrary, those that were fabricated elsewhere were there accepted as a whole. On all questions, from the picture and the book in vogue, there were the same stereotyped words. Nothing new was ever heard there. Adrienne suffered in seeing a man of Vaudrey's intelligence waste so much time, and asked herself if he were not sure to reproach her later for having induced him to spend an evening in this Parisian house where all was on the surface, where all was *chic* and glitter. She was in haste to get away. She saw that Sulpice was equally desirous to depart. She profited by the first opportunity to say to him, in a low voice:

"Shall we go?"

"Yes—by all means!"

He looked for Lissac, and told him that he would talk to him fully at another time, and Guy stood near the door, watching the exit of the Minister and Madame Vaudrey, a little earlier than was to the taste of Madame Gerson.

Adrienne was nervously anxious to be alone once

more with her husband. She was wearied to death by the scandal she had heard, and said to herself that there was nothing in the world half as precious as the hours she and Sulpice passed together.

"Do not be troubled," she exclaimed, as soon as she and her husband were in the carriage. "I shall never drag you out again for such another evening. You were bored to death, I am sure?"

"No—I was thinking of something else," answered Vaudrey, who, in truth, had been thinking of Marianne.

Madame Vaudrey had hardly left the salon before her late hostess, Madame Gerson, whispered in the ear of a friend:

"What dull creatures our Ministers' wives are!—don't you think so?"

Lissac, who certainly heard that night everything that was not intended for his ear, said:

"Would that more of our Ministers were married," he exclaimed, "if their wives could only be half as charming as Madame Vaudrey!"

Madame Gerson smiled and shrugged her shoulders, but at the same time reflected that Lissac was very indulgent to Adrienne, who, in her turn, showed much clemency toward Lissac.

CHAPTER XIII.

INFATUATION.

SINCE she had come to believe that Monsieur de Rosas might be induced to marry her, Marianne was in a great state of perplexity. She was playing for high stakes, and it was necessary to choose between the Minister and the Duc.

She did not love Vaudrey. She thought him at times absolutely ridiculous, with his innocence and inexperience. She said as much to Claire Dujarrier. But she, nevertheless, wished to keep him, and she knew perfectly well that she could do as she pleased with Sulpice. Such a person was not to be disdained. As to Rosas, she experienced for him a sentiment which was not love, but which was more like astonishment, mingled with a hearty liking.

Rosas respected her, and the timidity of this man, in whose veins ran the blood of heroes, flattered her. He talked to her almost exclusively of his love, but without proposing to prove it to her in any way, and this platonic affection, which in Vaudrey she would have thought ridiculous, seemed very charming in the great lord. The Duc elevated her in her own eyes.

He had, however, never again uttered the word marriage, it had probably escaped his lips unawares, and

Marianne was too wise to appear to notice it. She never made the smallest allusion to it. She waited, content to feel that each day strengthened her power over Rosas, and in the meanwhile, as it was necessary to live, she kept Vaudrey.

She now carried on these two intrigues, and made Rosas believe that the Minister was merely her friend and the patron of her uncle, while she imposed on Vaudrey to such an extent that he was content to accept her statement that the Duc, since she had dismissed him, had become resigned. She could swear in all truth that Rosas was not her lover.

It required no great talent to deceive Vaudrey, who was absolutely blinded by his infatuation. He had been for a brief time somewhat cautious after Jouvénet had told him that his secret was no longer his own, but after a few simple precautions he returned with new ardor to the Hôtel where Marianne somewhat wearily expected him.

Two months elapsed—the dead season in Paris, the summer — Adrienne went for a time to Dauphiné where Vaudrey was to preside at the General Council, and it was with almost childish joy that she saw once more the old house in Grenoble where she had formerly lived. And even under that roof which had known no other than pure affections, Vaudrey thought of Marianne, and had no other idea than that of seeing her, writing her daily letters which she scarcely read, but tossed aside with a shrug of her shoulders.

He was utterly worn out with a succession of pro

vincial fêtes given in his honor, with speeches to make and deputations to receive. He was dragged to all the *Maries* in the District, and stunned by the braying of brass instruments in his ear. He delivered oration after oration, and was received in striped tents, from the tops of which floated tricolor flags, and received interminable Deputations from Friends of Peace and Friends of War. Everywhere he went he was compelled to listen to new petitions, demands for appropriations, demands for assistance, and demands for decorations. It seemed to him that they had conspired to kill him all the time they were shouting "Long live Vaudrey!"

The Prefect and the General commanding the Division were continually on either side of Vaudrey, who became intensely disgusted with their embroidered coats. He knew in advance what the Prefect was going to say, each time he opened his lips. Progress, the Future, the fusion of parties and interests, the grandeur of the Department, the prosperity of the manufactories and the tanneries, the merits of the Minister who was to save his country, each topic was in turn touched upon.

Here came shouts of "Long live Vaudrey!"

The General, however, varied his efforts, for he scolded occasionally, and on the day of the inauguration of the statue of a certain well known manufacturer of gloves, Vaudrey heard him say, over and over again, with dull reiteration, "I like bronze. I like bronze."

This was, perhaps, the only amusing incident in

Vaudrey's summer excursion, and he laughed whenever he thought of the perpetual refrain:

"I love bronze. I love bronze!"

That evening at the banquet, the Minister was gratified by an explanation of this mystical sentence. The General rose from his chair, and while the champagne foamed in the glass which he grasped in his hand, he cried in a stentorian voice as if at the head of his troops:

"I love bronze because it makes our cannon and our statues; I love bronze, because artillery is to-day our best service, although the cavalry may be more chivalric. I love bronze, because it represents a soldier's heart, and I should like to see an army of men of bronze in our land." He became embarrassed, turned all colors, rolled up his eyes until only the whites were to be seen, and finally brandished his glass, and amid the frantic applause of the guests shouted vociferously, "I love bronze! I love bronze!"

Vaudrey, in spite of all his Ministerial dignity, could not restrain his laughter; but when he went back to Grenoble that night, with his carriage full of flowers, and Adrienne asked him if his speech had been a success, he had nothing to say except that he was tired out with laughing and had a headache.

He gave, however, a full account of what had taken place in a letter to Marianne, and added:

"All this applause, all these approving voices were not worth one word from your lips. When shall I see you again, my beloved?"

"Not as long as I can help it!" said the beloved to herself.

It was with profound ennui that she beheld the summer drawing to an end, and the approach of the Parliamentary season which would bring Vaudrey back and inflict his daily presence upon her. Sulpice was generous and she was unwilling to break with him until she had brought Rosas to terms. Her game was too important a one, however, to allow her to run any risks. With Vaudrey she could show herself as she really was; while with José she was still obliged to feign all the purity with which she had long since parted.

The Spaniard's mind was in a singular state of confusion in regard to her. His imagination had created an ideal Marianne, who was good and pure, clever even if a trifle ignorant, and who at once amused and disconcerted him.

He had left the Hôtel Continental and hired an apartment on the Champs Elysées, where he frequently received Marianne as if she had been a Princess. He absolutely adored this woman and made no further attempt to resist her fascination. He had forgotten his suspicions in regard to Guy when he first knew her. It seemed to him that it was he himself who had discovered her, and then, too, she had never loved this Guy. No, indeed, she was frankness itself, and would not have hesitated to avow the whole had there been anything to tell. He believed in Marianne. All that extraordinary reasoning which people who are about

to commit a folly indulge in, was let loose in José's mind. He made no effort to analyze his position, but passed the most delicious summer of his life in constant association with this woman, the tips of whose fingers, even, he did not dare touch with his lips.

Once, however, when walking with Marianne in the Champs Elysées he met old Dujarrier with her swollen eyelids and yellow hair. One of his friends, the Marquis Vergano, had killed himself when only twenty, out of love for this woman, who was old enough to be his mother. La Dujarrier stopped to speak to Marianne and bowed to the Duc most cordially. He returned her salutation in the most distant and chilling manner.

"Why do you bow to that woman?" he afterward said to Marianne.

"I need her services. She has been of use to me several times."

"It is very strange. I thought she was incapable of doing anything but evil."

He did not dream of the real connection between the two women. It seemed to José that in that modest room near le Jardin des Plantes, Marianne was amid her true surroundings. She sometimes went to her piano, which she had rescued from the ruins of the past, and played for Rosas strange Eastern music which took him far away to the desert, and then all at once rushed into the air he had hummed when he lay on the heap of straw, sick and deserted.

"I adore that rondeau!" she said.

He no longer talked of resuming his wanderings. Mademoiselle Kayser's grasp became each day more and more secure. The vague mystery which hung about the girl augmented his passion.

He asked her sometimes what her uncle was doing.

"Oh! he has obtained, thanks to Monsieur Vaudrey, the decoration of some public baths. He is now at work on a fresco. We will go and see it some day."

"But do you know," continued Marianne, "what I most wish to see in the whole world?"

"And what is that?"

"Your beloved Spain. The country where you, Rosas, were born: and in what town was that?"

"In Toledo. That is where the family château stands."

"With portraits and armor?"

"Yes, of course."

"Ah then, I wish to go to Toledo to see this château. Is it very splendid?"

"It is very dreary. A fortress on a rock. It is of gray stone on a red rock scorched by the sun—large halls half Moorish in their architecture—walls as thick as those of a prison—old bearded portraits of ancestors buttoned tightly in their pourpoints, and of defunct duchesses pale and half buried in their laces, which Claude Caïllis or Velasquez delighted to paint—immense, chilly rooms where the footsteps of visitors sound as if in empty tombs. You would die of ennui at the end of two hours, and of cold at the end of a week.

"Die of cold in Spain?"

"There is a spiritual cold, you know," answered the Duc, with a strange smile. "It was perhaps in order to escape from that, that I left Toledo and have travelled so much. The mere idea of you in Toledo, at Fuentecarral—that is the name of the château—strikes me as very absurd. To carry a Frenchwoman, a native of Paris there, would be an absolute brutality. It would be about the same thing as to put a hummingbird into a bear pit. No, thank Heaven, there are other places in Spain where I could take you. In Cordova and Seville, my jasmines bloom and my fountains sparkle, they await your coming if you will but go! But Toledo! That frightful château of Fuentecarral! I would not take you there for all the world!"

But Marianne, as she contemplated him with eager eyes, said to herself that it was in those very gardens that she wished to walk, and that it would please her to enter this sepulchral château of Fuentecarral, and strike the pale ancestors with horror at her Parisian airs and graces.

And this light in Marianne's eyes, José mistook for love.

Ah! how these six months in Paris had bound him to this woman.

One day—Vaudrey had just left Marianne at the *rond-pont* in the Champs Elysées—the Duc said suddenly as she entered his apartment:

"I was just about to write you."

"For what, my dear Duc?"

"To ask you to see me, my child, in our little retreat."

He placed her in a chair and holding both her hands in his, he looked her full in the face and said to her:

"Swear to me that de Lissac has never been your lover."

She did not start. She had known for sometime that this question must come.

She bore his keen eyes without flinching, and said:

"Do men ask such questions of the women they love?"

"Suppose I asked the Duchess of Rosas the question?" said the Spainard with trembling lips.

She became as white as himself.

"I do not understand," she murmured.

The Duc was silent a moment, and then with his whole soul in his voice he said:

"I have no family, Marianne. I belong entirely to myself, and I love you. Swear to me that you have been nothing to Guy."

"No one has the right to say that he ever touched my lips," answered Marianne, firmly. "One man took me from my home and left me heart-broken and desolate. I supposed myself incapable of loving again until I met you. That man is dead."

"I know," said Rosas, "you confided this to me before. And to you I offer myself, my name, my love and all my life."

"Ah! You know that I love you!" she cried, pressing her lips to his as she spoke.

"Then no one—"

"No one."

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"Upon your honor?"

"Upon my honor."

"Ah! how I love you," he exclaimed, all his passion breaking through his reserve as the sun melts the ice. "If you knew how jealous and how mad I am about you! I adore you. Your eyes burn my heart. I love you, and only the recollection of Guy has prevented me from telling you long since, that all that is mine in this world is yours also. I am a strange person as you know, and capable of strange things —of preposterous anger and vehemence—and even of flight, for I fled from you once, Marianne. But now all this is over. You will be my wife. My wife! what blessed words. I have loved you for years, Marianne. Did you never suspect it?"

"I knew it, and I loved you in return, but I saw that you believed me to have given myself to another—but you were wrong. All my love, all myself I gave to you—I hate the Past and wish to forget it. Let us live in the Present and in the Future."

She left José and walked alone down the Champs Elysée. She was, so to speak, drunk with joy; the russet leaves from the trees rained down upon her head. She went on unheeding—it seemed to her that Paris was her own.

That evening she was to go to the theatre. It had been agreed that Vaudrey should meet her when she came out and take her back to la Rue Prony.

Now however, all this was changed. She wrote him that she could not go out—she was suffering with a

headache. It was Uncle Kayser whom she bade find a messenger to take this note.

"You would not care to have me take it, myself, to the Minister I suppose?"

"Are you mad?" said Marianne.

"That is true, it would be immoral!"

She wished to be alone in order to give full scope to her fancy, and to indulge in such dreams as she pleased.

Dreams? why should she talk of dreams? was it not a dazzling reality—a fortune, a title, the end of all her povérty!

"I wonder if I am going mad!" she suddenly exclaimed.

She had been seized with a wild terror. Suppose all this crumbled before her like a house of cards. She wished the next few weeks were happily over.

"Time passes so quickly, and yet we are always tempted to spur it on!" she said aloud.

The solitude of her Hôtel began to oppress her. She could neither read nor think. She was in a fever of unrest, and regretted having written to Vaudrey. She wanted to go to the theatre, there was a new operetta, it would amuse her and why should she not go? She had the coupons of her *loge* before her on the table and she could tell Vaudrey, that her headache was gone.

"Then too he tires me to death, this Vaudrey, especially now."

But it was dangerous to trifle with Vaudrey, for

if any suspicions were aroused in the Duc's mind he was quite capable of taking flight once more. She must settle other matters too with the Minister.

"There is that Gochard note—but he will pay it, I have nothing to do with that of course!"

Then all at once she decided that she would go, Sulpice might think what he pleased. She rang for her maid.

"Madame is going to the theatre?"

"Yes, Justine, to the Renaissance.

She was greatly amused and very much admired. She liked to be alone in her box—and to be looked at. There was a duchess in the Opera Bouffe whose adventures entertained the house. But after a while Marianne's thoughts began to wander. She forgot the theatre and the actors and was wandering under the orange trees in a distant land.

Between the acts, she heard a tap on the door of her *loge*. She looked around in some astonishment. It was Jouvénet the Prefect of Police, who saluted her gallantly—he always paid his respects to her in the most deferential manner whenever he met her. There was no need for her to play a part for him—he knew all her secrets. Such a man could be very useful to her. Jouvénet never mentioned Vaudrey's name to her, but as he was in the way of knowing even better than other men that nothing is durable in this world, he stood ready to succeed the President at some future time.

Marianne let him say what he would and received

his gallantries as she did his bonbons, and cleverly kept him at a distance without wounding his self-love.

Jouvénet, simply to show Marianne that he was thoroughly well informed, asked her as he caressed his whiskers if she often saw the Duc de Rosas. A most delightful man too! And Jouvénet smiled while Marianne studied his face hoping to divine his thoughts.

The Prefect not willing to appear intrusive now turned the conversation by saying:

"Ah! there is one of our old friends looking at you."

It was Guy de Lissac who stood a little in the background examining her *loge* through his glass.

Marianne had met Lissac very rarely of late, but she had felt towards him a certain rancor and was conscious of a vague hostility on his part. Guy was especially anxious to return Sulpice to his wife. He pitied Madame Vaudrey, and perhaps to this sensation of pity was joined still another sentiment. He was vexed at the blindness of this husband who could not appreciate the charm of this sensitive creature. This irritation which he had no right to show Vaudrey, he allowed Marianne to see under cover of a jest. Marianne had been deeply wounded by it. What right had this man she asked herself, to meddle with her affairs—and who now added to the wounds he had formerly inflicted, these uncalled-for sarcasms.

"He is jealous after all," she said to herself. "He is an idiot."

Guy was still watching her.

"You do not like it?" said Jouvénet.

"I do not care. What is it to me?"

"He loved you once very much."

"Ah! sir," said Marianne, quickly, "I know that your *métier* compels you to play the part of an inquisitor, but I should be infinitely obliged if you would allow my Past to rest quietly in its winding sheet."

Jouvénet bit his lips, and lifting his opera-glass, inspected Lissac in his turn.

"Ah!" he said, "he persists in wearing the Cross of Portugal. It is really in very bad taste. I thought him too clever for that."

"Is this order, then, in bad repute?"

"By no means, but as it is the same color of the Legion of Honor, it is not permitted to any one to put it in his button-hole without brightening it with a small gold cross. I see only red in this bontonniére."

"I beg your pardon, sir; he has the cross."

"Oh! my glass is very poor! Then, too, I do not think that Monsieur de Lissac is authorized to wear this decoration, but it is easy to find out. I will, in the meantime, have a note inserted in the *Officiel* to-morrow in regard to the illegal wearing of foreign decorations."

"Will that do Lissac any harm?"

"Not in the least. But it is he who has made me carry out an idea that I have had in my mind for some time."

The *entr'acte* was over. Jouvénet retired after repeating to Marianne all sorts of assurances of inte-

rest, which were almost the same as declarations of love, telling her, moreover, that the day might come when she would be very glad—"

"I thank you sincerely, sir," interrupted Marianne, most courteously, "and I shall not hesitate to avail myself of your kindness."

Something told her that Guy would make his appearance in her box to rally her a little on the presence of Jouvénet. She was right—Lissac appeared.

He seated himself at Marianne's side and said, somewhat abruptly: "I congratulate you, my friend."

"And on what, pray?" she replied, somewhat amazed.

"On the great news of the day; on your marriage."

The color left her face.

"How did you know?"

"I have just seen the Duc. He came to call on me."

"To call on you—for what?"

"Perhaps you have some faint idea?"

"To ask you what our relations had been? Lissac, you are extremely impertinent."

"Oh! my dear Marianne, reassure yourself and prepare to become a Duchess. A gentleman to whom you have sworn that I had not been your lover could not doubt your word, of course! José asked me nothing of the kind. He simply announced his determination in order to see what I should say, or, perhaps, by my expression to judge what I thought."

"And what did you say to him?"

"I congratulated him."

Marianne fixed her clear, gray eyes upon Lissac.

"Congratulated him?" she said, slowly.

"The woman he is about to marry is certainly very beautiful."

"A truce to these petty insults, Lissac! What has got you of late?"

"Nothing. But you have got something or somebody."

"Rosas, you mean?"

"No; Vaudrey."

"I will give him back to you. It seems to me that you are singularly interested in Vaudrey, or in his wife—which is it?'

She smiled wickedly.

"Duchess," said Lissac, "it would be as well if you should learn to respect good women!"

"It was to utter these amenities, I suppose, that you came to my *loge*.

"No; it was to ask some information."

"On what point?"

"Is it true," he said, in a tone that was almost cordial, "is it true that you are to marry Rosas?"

"And why not?" she asked haughtily.

"Because—well! to be frank with you, because I have always looked upon you as an honest woman. You said as much to me one day. Mad, fantastic, capricious and extravagant, you have been all these things often and charming always, dishonorable never. Take from Rosas his love and his fortune, and I shall find no fault; but to take his name is a shabby act, which I should not expect from you."

"That is to say, I may take his money like a *fille*, but I am not to marry him, like—"

"A pure young girl; no, you cannot do that. You place me, too, in a most delicate position. Were I to tell Rosas the truth, I should act the part of a rascal toward you. If I keep silence to my friend, for he is my friend, and I am under great obligations to him, I should be an absolute villain toward him."

"Did he ask you to speak?"

"No; but there is a still voice within me which tells me that in allowing you to marry the Duc, I am doing a most unwise thing. Do you know what the Duc did ask me? To be his best man."

Marianne was almost tempted to laugh aloud at this.

"It is absurd!" she said. "You did not accept?"

"I did accept, on the contrary. But I hoped in you; I felt that you would relieve me from such a responsibility."

"You wish me to do what? Pray explain yourself."

"I wish—no, I do not wish you to marry de Rosas."

Marianne shrugged her shoulders.

She detected a covert menace in Lissac's words, but she chose to disdain it. By what right did he interfere now? Because she had given him her youth and her beauty? The duties of friendship! the rights of friendship! To protect Vaudrey! To defend Rosas! What utter nonsense.

"And if I choose to marry him, would you prevent me?"

"Yes; if I could!" he said, firmly. "It would then

be the time to oppose the free masonry of men to the free masonry of women!"

"You are cruel and mean enough when you each fight your own battles by yourselves, what would you then be when you are associated?" said Marianne, almost fiercely. "Tell me," she said, after a moment's silence, "what you propose to do? You will send my letters to the Duc, I suppose?"

"That is one way, certainly," answered Lissac, gently, "it is a very feminine thing to do at all events."

"You still have my letters, then?"

"Yes; most preciously guarded."

He did not intend to threaten her, but she at once saw the danger in which she stood.

"If I were to ask you for these letters, you would give them to me, I presume?"

"Probably."

"If I were to ask you to bring them to me, to that little room of which I once spoke to you, you would come?"

She leaned toward Lissac, as she spoke, and her hand touched his knee.

She was conscious of a shiver all through his body. She knew then she was safe.

"Ah!" she said, with a smile, "you are not half as bad as you pretend to be."

The orchestra struck the first notes of the prelude to the third act.

"Let me see you soon, my dear enemy!" said Marianne, with her hand extended.

He hesitated to take this slender, well-gloved hand, but finally did so.

"Let me have Rosas," he said.

"Jealous!" she cried. "I am quite willing to leave you Vaudrey."

She laughed, but Lissac went away in a very discontented frame of mind.

"I must have my letters at any hazard," thought Marianne, when he had gone. "It would be much wiser."

She slept but ill that night, and awoke in a wretched humor the next morning. In spite of her pale face and drooping eyes, she was still very lovely.

She asked herself all the morning what she had best do, and finally decided to write to Guy.

Just as she had arrived at this decision Sulpice Vaudrey appeared to tell her that he had a whole day to himself.

"I heard from Jouvénet this morning, that you had been to the theatre. Why did you rob me of one evening?"

He took his seat with the air of a man entirely at home. Marianne was seeking for some pretext for dismissing him, when her maid, with a note on a tray, appeared.

"What is it?" she asked, hastily.

"A messenger with this letter, Madame."

Marianne read the letter hastily.

Vaudrey saw her change color.

"Is the messenger still here?"

"No, Madame, he has gone. He said there was no reply."

Marianne rapidly tore the note she had just read into tiny bits.

"You are annoyed?" asked Vaudrey.

"Extremely so."

"May I know why?"

"No; it would not interest you. A family matter."

"Your uncle?" Sulpice asked, with a kindly smile.

"Yes; my uncle."

"He asked me to allow him to exhibit at the Trocadao, the designs he has just completed—symbolical compositions, you know."

"Yes; I know," answered Marianne, impatiently.

And she with difficulty restrained herself from bidding her lover depart.

The letter she had destroyed was written by Rosas, and sent by Uncle Kayser who had received it at his studio. The Duc informed Marianne that he should expect her at five o'clock at his rooms. He must speak to her. He had thought all night, and had not closed his eyes. Marianne remembered her own dreams. Had Rosas seized her wandering thoughts as they floated on the night wind?

At five o'clock! She would be punctual. But how should she get rid of Vaudrey. She could not feign illness for she had received him, and he would install himself at her side, and drive her wild with his attempts at taking care of her. What possible pretext could she invent, what plea for going out? Her lover

was absolutely radiant with joy, and evidently anticipated a long tête-à-tête.

"The idiot!" thought Marianne, "he will never go away."

The best thing to do was to go out herself. She would lose him somewhere.

"What o'clock is it?" she asked.

"Just one."

"Then I have ample time?" she said.

Vaudrey looked surprised. Marianne announced hastily, that she had some purchases to make.

"How provoking!"

"O, yes, to me!"

"I beg your pardon," said Sulpice, recovering himself.

She sent for a coupé, and poor Vaudrey found that the delicious day that he had promised himself was replaced by long hours in the damp air. The windows of the coupé closed with great difficulty, and as she pulled her shawl around her she asked herself if she could leave her lover somewhere, or how she should find some means of warning Rosas. But it was still more important for her to see Lissac and at once, for the more she thought of it, the more certain she felt that there was danger in that quarter.

She could not write a line to Guy, for Sulpice would certainly question her; it would be an imprudent thing to do.

"And yet I must tell Guy to expect me. Where? In la Rue Cuvier? He would not come! No, at his own rooms."

She would find some way of doing this after they were in the coupé.

It was clear that Vaudrey did not mean to leave her—in fact he said, over and over again, the day was his own. She drove to the *Louvre.*

"I have purchases to make."

Sulpice would not follow her; he waited in a coupé at the door on La Place du Palais Royale, sitting in one corner of the carriage with the shades pulled down. He was miserably cold.

Marianne leisurely made her way through the shops with scarce a glance at the display of gloves, artificial flowers and Japanese art. She mounted the stairs hung with tapestry, her slender feet were buried in the thick carpet, and she entered a silent room where both men and women were reading or writing, as if in the drawing-room of a Hôtel. Before a large, round table old ladies and young girls were looking at the engravings in the *Illustration*, the caricatures in the *Journal Amusant* and the sketches in *la Vie Parisienne.* Others at the second table were reading the daily journals and the *Revue des Deux Mondes.* Further away on a table covered with red cloth, were morocco portfolios and round glass ink-stands in which the ink looked violet. Here people were writing, sitting in mahogany chairs with crimson velvet cushions. Plants with broad, shining leaves, made this dreary-looking room, lighted from above, a little less dismal.

Marianne felt as if far away from the great bazaar she had just traversed. She went directly to the table

quickly rising from an arm-chair in the ante-room, "Monsieur Eugène, you know?"

"Very good, Monsieur Eugène, I will announce you."

Lissac explained that it was not an official audience he asked of the Minister, he wished to see him on a private matter.

"Is the Minister in his own apartment, then?"

"Yes sir; but you know that to-day—"

What was going on to-day? Lissac had not noticed that a striped awning had been put up at the entrance of the Hôtel, and that benches of red velvet were being carried in. There was a Reception at the Ministry.

"Monsieur Vaudrey will receive me all the same," said Lissac.

One of the clerks opened a door, and summoned a lacquey who led him to the upper floor, where the Minister was luxuriously reading the newspapers after breakfast before the fire.

He seemed astonished but pleased, when he saw Guy.

"This is very good of you to come this morning. Did you receive your card all right for to-night?"

"No," said Lissac, "I have received nothing, and if the card came, Monsieur Jouvénet's agents took it away with many other things."

"Jouvénet's agents? What on earth do you mean?" asked the Minister.

He had risen to receive Guy, and now stood before the chimney looking intently at the friend who, in his

turn, looked at him, anxious to know if he—Vaudrey—could be in complete ignorance of such an affair.

"Can it be possible, then?" asked Guy, in a tone of concentrated bitterness, "that you know nothing of what goes on in Paris?"

"And what is going on?" asked Sulpice, changing color.

"Simply that innocent men are arrested and kept in secret confinement for two days, in order that there may be time to look through their papers and take away such as may compromise certain persons. It is very convenient, certainly, but smacks too much of the Melodrama and the Regency. It is by no means original, and I should advise you not to employ such methods, or allow them to be employed while you are in power."

"Are you mad?" asked the Minister, in boundless amazement.

He was evidently entirely puzzled. It was plain that he knew nothing of what Guy had come to tell.

"Do you not read the newspapers either?" asked Guy.

"I read certain portions of them."

"Very well then, possibly in these portions you have seen that I was arrested at a crowded Exposition on Wednesday—they—"

"Arrested! You?"

By the agents of Monsieur Jouvénet, your Préfect of Police, to gratify Mademoiselle Kayser, your mistress."

where paper was symmetrically arranged, and laying down her muff and pushing up her veil sat for some few moments nervously beating a march on the portfolio before her; then suddenly removing her gloves she took a sheet of paper and an envelope which bore the printed address of the house in the corner.

Marianne smiled as she looked for a pen, and thought of poor Sulpice shivering in the carriage before the door.

"Discipline is good for a Minister!" she said to herself. She was in no haste, and looked around the room amused at what she saw. A man in uniform was going about replacing the paper and envelopes as fast as they were used; if called for he was ready with stamps. A letter box was nailed near the tall chimney with a printed list of the hours at which the mails were taken.

Next to Marianne was a woman writing in feverish haste, and opposite were two girls who, with many laughs and giggles, showed each other the letters they had just finished writing.

"He will think that too cold," said one, as she nibbled the end of her Scotch-wood penholder.

Further off, in another room, Marianne perceived the corner of a buffet where a garçon in a white tie served ices and liquors. In the crowd around the buffet white caps were to be seen or the belaced head of a baby held above the shoulders of her nurse. Children's voices mingled with the jingle of glasses as they were set on the marble counter. A double light

—the light of gas and the whiter calcium light, imparted to this crowd a most fantastic appearance.

It seemed to Marianne that she was no longer in Paris, but that she had been suddenly transported to some American ferry boat, or that she was crossing the ocean in some transatlantic steamer. Close at her side there was a high screen of glass, and behind it she heard footsteps and the sound of glass and china. Looking up at the ceiling richly decorated with gold, she discovered that this must be the dining-room of the Hôtel de Louvre. The noise and the smell of cooking all made her feel more than before, as if she were on board a ship.

This procession of babies, mammas and nurses interested her very much. She studied the new fashions, the velvet and silk of their costumes, as leisurely as if she had been at the theatre. The two pretty young girls in front of her amused themselves, one in writing nonsense on a sheet of paper the other in reading it over her shoulder. Their laughing faces were very attractive. One wore a Hungarian toque, a wide linen collar almost covering her shoulders, and a vest with huge steel buttons. The toque made Marianne think of Guy, and there came into her wicked eyes a greenish, malicious light.

She drew the paper toward her but hesitated, what should she write. She wanted to say something which should interest and mystify him, something too, which should disturb the serene composure on which he plumed himself.

"What I should like to write," she said to herself, "is that he is utterly detestable, and I loathe him!"

She stopped again and looked around utterly oblivious of Vaudrey. The contrast of this silent reading-room with the uproar of the immense bazaar below, the noise of which reached her like the roar of a distant sea, amused Marianne immensely, and added to the pleasure she felt in keeping a President of the Council cooling his heels while waiting for her.

"This is a very odd place, certainly," she said to herself, as the odor of distant cookery mingled with the perfume of opoponax came to her from behind the glass partition. The gorgeousness of the heavy curtains falling in front of the immense windows down to the floor covered with a rich toned Persian carpet, suggested an Americanized Versailles; the clatter of dishes and jingling of glass—the strange combination of a Turkish bazaar and of a huge American hotel—a caravansery of Cairo and a Yankee bar. The startling contradictions, the crude and the magnificent, the draughty galleries, the crowd and the noise, seemed to her very droll, quite modern and interesting.

"And so convenient!" she said to herself, as the girls laughed when they finished their love letter.

Finally she began to write, having decided what she should do. She would send Rosas a letter of excuse and tell him she would see him the next day at the same hour. She would tell him that her uncle had taken the whole of her day, had made her go out with him to buy some hangings at the Louvre to aid him in an eastern pic-

ture that he wished to paint. If Rosas did not receive the letter in time it would not make much difference.

Then she wrote to Lissac, and this was the important point—that she would be at his rooms at ten o'clock the next morning.

As she dropped this note into the letter box she smiled. "It is a preposterous place this, but a very convenient one."

She wondered how many hands trembling or bold had slipped into the open mouth of this box some little billet which was the beginning or the end of crime.

Then she slowly descended the stairs and found Vaudrey fidgetting in his coupé.

"I beg ten thousand pardons for staying so long," she said.

"I hope at all events," asked Vaudrey in a hoarse voice, "that you bought something you liked."

"I bought nothing, there was nothing in the shops."

Vaudrey was startled. Did she propose to visit all the shops one after the other, he asked himself.

Marianne took pity on him.

"Let us go home," she said, "you look cold."

She called to the coachman—

"Rue Prony!"

Sulpice took her hand and thanked her, sneezing as he did so.

"How thoughtful and kind you are?" he murmured.

The next day Marianne rang at the door in la Rue d'Aumale a little before the hour she had named to Lissac.

"With the punctuality of a creditor," she thought.

She entered Guy's pleasant salon pale and determined. She was carefully and exquisitely dressed. She was resolved to try any and all measures, but not to leave that house without her letters.

It was only these miserable things that of all her past she could not explain away. She was wretched until she had seen them in the fire.

But suppose Guy should refuse to let her have them. It was not possible, in spite of his affection for Rosas, that he would dare do this. But between his gratitude toward a woman and his duty to a friend, one may well hesitate.

"His affection for José will never permit him to forget what he owes me," thought Marianne.

Then, shrugging her shoulders:

"After all, as Rosas said, a strong free masonry exists between men! That between women is nothing to it."

Guy did not appear in the least displeased when Mademoiselle Kayser was announced. He had long expected her. He was certain that Marianne would never feel comfortable or free, so long as he held in his hands a proof of her follies. And the day would certainly arrive when Marianne would come to him, either with threats or entreaties. The letter which had reached him the evening before had informed him that this was the long expected day. He had just finished his toilet when she appeared. His Swedish gloves lay on a small table with his hat and stick, and

in a little cup of old Cloisonné were displayed the many-colored rosettes, some among them red, with a tiny gold cross in the center, like a beetle shining in a crimson rose.

"I believe you were going out," said Marianne, abruptly. "You did not receive my letter, then?"

"My dear Marianne," answered Guy, as he finished tying the knot of his cravat, "that is precisely the same question which you asked, when, after an absence of years, you at last condescended to appear in my apartment. You have a way of announcing yourself which is altogether too modest. I assure you that I always expect you, and always with impatience, but to-day, more especially than other days, because of your charming note."

She knew Guy so well that she at once discovered, under the exquisite politeness of his words, the sarcasm they veiled.

She did not reply except with a smile, but continued to warm her feet, standing in front of the bright little fire.

"You are very good," she said at last. "I am really very fond of you. You laugh! I mean what I say, though. And really, I do not think you have ever had much reason to complain of me!"

She half turned as she spoke, her left hand still resting on the mantel-shelf covered with dark velvet, and gave Lissac a look which brought up a host of old recollections.

"I never made any complaint," said the young man,

"and I have expressed my gratitude to you on several occasions."

Marianne began to laugh at the little air of ceremony with which Lissac spoke.

"You are very foolish sometimes," she said. "We have loved each other very much, and it is in the name of this love that I have come to ask you to do me a service."

"You have only to speak, my dear Marianne," answered Lissac, indifferently, and as if he had not noticed the tenderness in her voice.

He was coldly polite. Marianne replied by an affectation of her old passion.

She looked at him with earnest, beseeching eyes.

"I am almost afraid," she said, with dainty timidity.

"Afraid? And of what?"

"I do not know," she replied. "You are right, perhaps. I am giving you a great deal of trouble and disturbing you!"

"Not the least in the world. I breakfast at the Club, take a little turn in the Bois, and go to the *Mirlitons* for the opening. You see that I can sacrifice to you, without taking to myself any especial credit, a day that is perfectly at my disposal."

"Is the exhibition at the *Mirlitons* good for anything?" asked Marianne, in an indifferent tone.

"It is excellent. There is a collection of things to be sold for the benefit of a dead artist. Will you go there with me at four o'clock?"

"No, thanks. I repeat that I do not wish to disturb

you, my dear Guy; you know if I am indiscreet in coming here."

She was fingering as she talked the silk rosettes in the little cup; she took them up and let them drop again, in a mechanical sort of way.

"Are these all yours?" she said. "Come here and let me decorate you!"

She went to Guy, and leaning familiarly against him, she stood for a minute holding him by the lappel of his vest.

"What an idea, Marianne. I do not always wear those ribbons."

"No, but I remember that long ago I put in your button hole some foreign decoration brought you by Monsieur de Rosas."

She pronounced this name boldly, as if she were firing her first shot.

"It is very becoming to you," she added. "Decorations in your button-holes are like the diamonds in our ears—neither is of the smallest use, but they are very nice!"

She passed a red ribbon as she spoke through his button-hole, and Guy, glancing down, saw that this charming brow, these fair tresses were within reach of his lips. He perceived the faint, delicate odor of new mown hay, and the touch of this woman's hand upon his breast affected his nerves.

He disengaged himself gently, while Marianne said again:

"It is very becoming!"

And grasping this man's hands she leaned toward him.

"Do you know why I came?" she murmured. "You know that I am a little crazy? Well! the other night all my love for you returned when you mortified me by your irony. Ah! how stupid we women are. Do you remember what happy days have been ours? Say, Guy, have you forgotten them all? Did you never dream of living them once again?"

Lissac's laugh was nervous and he gave a little involuntary shudder.

All about her recalled the past. The pressure of the dumb hands recalled the quivering touch of long ago. He half closed his eyes; he felt a hot flush rise to his brow, and yet had strength to say to himself that he understood this woman's aim; that she had come to him with the intention of speaking of love, although she felt none, meaning to do her best to revive banished associations.

"And yet you left me," she said gently. "You wearied of me very soon! Do you know one thing, Guy that there is only one woman in each of our sex? But the Marianne of to-day is vastly different from the Marianne you knew. You shall never leave me again!"

She tempted this man, accustomed to facile amours, through his curiosity. He foresaw danger, but nevertheless perceived within reach of his own, warm, rosy lips full of promise. He seized, with a kind of passionate anger, this woman who summoned him with

such eagerness, and who, throwing her arms around his neck, murmured between her kisses, "I love you!"

A half-hour later he, with bitter shame, realized the treachery of which he had been guilty toward Rosas, and perhaps toward Vaudrey.

Was it with the woman who was dear to Vaudrey, or with the future wife of the Duc de Rosas that he had forgotten himself?

His heart swelled with a feeling of almost disgust. Yet she was adorably beautiful, this Marianne. But with melancholy certainty he waited to know what meanness was expected after this weakness on his part.

Marianne pushed back the hair from her face and said, with a smile:

"Well—what is the matter?"

He went to the window and looked down into the court-yard, where his eyes saw nothing. Between these two persons who had just embraced each other so madly, a sudden icy barricade had risen as if they each divined that the minute was close at hand when their accounts must be settled.

Marianne stood in front of the mirror arranging her hair, her white shoulders gleamed in the firelight. She looked down at her wrists to see if all her bracelets were there, and mechanically glanced toward the couch to ascertain if some bangle had not fallen there.

"Guy!" she said, suddenly, with an abruptness which she vainly sought to make caressing, "Swear to me that you will not refuse that which I am about to ask!"

"I swear!"

"I wish that our affection which is real and intense —is it not, Guy?—should date only from the minute which we have just lived."

"But I do not regret the Past."

"Nor I! And yet I would like to efface it; yes, efface it entirely."

She held in her white fingers a few hairs twisted up, and these she threw into the clear flame.

"Burn it like that I mean!"

"Burn it!" repeated Lissac.

He left the window and returning to Marianne, he said, with a smile:

"Why burn it? Because it is an annoyance or a danger?"

"Because it is both," she answered, with needless vehemence.

She stood for a moment in silence, then, with her head a little on one side, she said slowly:

"You still have my letters, my friend?"

"Your letters?"

"Those I wrote you so long ago."

"Oh! To be sure," he replied. He saw it all now. "You came here to-day to ask for them."

"And I have been very good, you will admit, not to have asked for them before."

"You have been most generous!" answered Lissac, with a charming smile.

He opened a drawer in his secretary, where lay several packages neatly tied together with ribbons, sleeping the sad sleep of forgotten things.

"There are your letters, my dear Marianne! But you have nothing to fear. They have never been out of this drawer."

The woman's eyes flashed with joy. She moved softly to Guy's side, and as if she feared he would not give them to her, almost snatched them from his hand.

"My letters!" she cried.

"A whole romance," said Lissac.

"Less the epilogue," she replied, with a caressing glance.

She laid the package on the velvet covered shelf of the chimney, while she finished arranging her hair. Then taking between her fingers one of those small, old-fashioned envelopes, upon which was her monogram and around which clung some vague feminine perfume, she looked at it for a moment, and, without turning to Lissac, she said:

"You have read them sometimes?"

"I know them by heart."

"My poor letters! I was very much in earnest, do you know, when I wrote them. They must be very naïve. Yours, on the contrary, which I burned long ago, were very brilliant. I remember how one day you wrote me from Holland: 'I pass my life among objects of Art, but my thoughts are far away. I have Rembrandt and Ruysdael, but the smallest grain of millet would please me better, for millet is blonde!' That was very prettily said, but it struck me at the time that love is not often so witty. I tell you this merely to prove that literature will not lose much by the destruction of my chirography."

As she spoke, she threw the little bundle into the fire, and watched the letters unfold with strange contortions, then, all at once, begin to flame up, throwing a clear light on Marianne's face. And very soon there was nothing left on the log in the fire-place, except some black powder which waved to and fro like a mortuary vail blown in the wind. All the dust of dead love, the cinders of oaths, were black and dull as crape.

Marianne watched these letters burn with a pensive smile, but with a flash of triumph under her drooping lids.

When the last fragment was reduced to ashes, she turned to Guy and in a totally different voice, and with a haughty, insolent manner, she said:

"Requiescat! It is all finished! Lovers who loved no longer invented cremation ages ago. There is nothing new under the sun."

She was another woman. All the caressing humility of the half hour previous was transformed into a certain sarcastic bravado, and she looked at Lissac with the expression of a victor contemplating a dupe.

He bit his lips and as he rubbed his hands together watched her countenance without in the least concealing that he did so. Marianne's ironical smile told him at once just what she was going to say.

This was by no means the first time that he had witnessed this same sudden change in a woman's face before and after letters were returned. But, in truth, Guy had long ceased to be astonished at anything connected with women.

"Now, my dear," said Marianne, "I hope you will do me the kindness to allow me to follow my own path in life, and trust that I shall never again find you between me and my end."

"I admit," answered Lissac, "that I should be the most ungrateful man in the world if I forgot what I owed you in the Past and in the Present. Your letters are still smoking, you see!"

Marianne gave a little knock with the tip of her well-fitting boot to the half-burned stick of wood. It broke in the middle, and falling, caused the paper to fly up like little black butterflies.

"I wish I could destroy the Past as readily as I burned these letters. It weighs upon me. Do you suppose," she said, turning fiercely upon him, "that I have for a moment forgiven your flight, and all that followed? If I was thrown into the mud, was it not your fault, for I loved you, I really loved you, and you left me as if I had been the most degraded of my sex! Look here, my dear, it is time for you to know that a woman never forgets, and I should have told you long since just what I tell you now, had I felt that I was free—free as since I burned my poor foolish letters—letters written to the man she loved when he was simply maturing his plans to desert her. And because I adored you, because I had given you all I cared to give, you arrogate to yourself the right to prevent my marrying whomsoever I choose, that is to say, you intend to do your best to prevent me from rising from the depths into which your selfishness threw me. This

is a little astonishing, my dear, and I must let you know what I think about it. I could not say this before, because you were quite capable of showing those letters to Rosas, and every line told volumes, for they told how stupidly I loved you."

"Monsieur de Rosas would never have seen them!" said Lissac, coldly.

She did not seem to hear.

"But now, thank heaven, it is different! You have given up these letters, these letters which you never intended me to have, and I have paid for them with new caresses, and there is no more to be said about it. We have nothing more in common—nothing! nothing! nothing! We two, who have just exchanged such passionate kisses, will never, I trust, know each other when we meet again in this world. You may be sure that I will do my best to avoid these meetings."

Guy did not open his lips.

He sat twisting his moustache and looking steadily at Marianne.

This phlegm, undoubtedly assumed, irritated his companion almost beyond endurance.

"Now go and find Monsieur de Rosas," she said. "Tell him that you have been my lover. He will not believe you without proofs."

"Of that I am quite certain," answered Lissac coldly.

She felt that there was a threat under his very calmness. But what had she now to fear?

Her quick eyes sought Guy's, and her ironical smile braved him.

He stood with the fingers of each hand touching each other, lightly tapping them together. It was the gesture of one who can afford to wait, who is sure of himself, and whose very silence is full of meaning.

"Then," she said suddenly, "I have nothing more to do here but to say farewell. I sincerely hope that I shall never set eyes upon you again."

"How can you help it?" asked Lissac with a smile. "We shall both continue to live in Paris, I presume."

He now seated himself, while Marianne stood putting on her gloves.

"Upon my word, my dear Marianne, you are for a clever woman, a singularly confiding one."

"I?"

"Yes, and most credulous. Did you consider me capable of a simplicity worthy of the Golden Age? Did you for a moment think that a worn and battered Parisian like myself could be cajoled and managed by a woman like a raw school boy? I admit that your fascinations are great, but had they been ten times greater you could not have done it. But dear friend, the first rule in such matters is not to lay down all one's arms until peace has been duly signed and there is no reason to anticipate the breaking out of another war. You showed your little pink nails too soon, my dear Marianne. There are in this drawer two or three letters more which will say as much, I fancy, as the whole package you have burned. They are really exquisite, perfumed, eloquent and impassioned. I would have given these to you if you had continued

to keep your claws sheathed. These were my reserve forces. Besides, a man can't stand still and see all such letters destroyed at one fell swoop. Tell me, Miss Marianne, will you condescend to recognize me when we meet?"

She stood as if turned to ice, cold and white.

"Then," she said slowly, "you kept—"

"A postscript, if you choose to call it so, yes."

"I wonder if you are lying now, or was it when you gave me the package I have burned?"

"I never told you that the package contained all your letters, and what I now say is the precise truth. I am sorry that you compelled me to preserve my batteries by unmasking yours too soon."

Marianne tore off her gloves in a rage.

"If you do not give them all to me, Monsieur de Lissac, you are a scoundrel! Do you hear, Monsieur de Lissac, a scoundrel!"

"Your insults, my dear child, are of no more importance than your kisses! But they are less agreeable!

She realized that she had indeed lifted her mask too soon, and that Lissac would never again be disarmed by her caresses or moved by her threats. Her game was lost.

Lost, or was it only compromised?

She looked around her with the impotent rage of some beautiful wild animal imprisoned in a cage. Her letters, her last letters lay in that drawer which she could have torn open with her nails. She had dashed

her gloves upon the floor and now mechanically tore her linen cambric handkerchief into strips.

"Take care what you do, Guy," she said finally, with a vicious look. "I have paid dearly for these letters, for I hate you. Do you hear? I have bought them, and you owe them to me as you would have owed your louis to a *fille*. If you do not give them to me, I will have them none the less."

"Do you really think so?"

"I certainly shall—"

"And suppose I have burned them?"

"It is false, you have them here! You have behaved to me like a thief."

"Come now, Marianne," said Lissac, coldly, "this way of talking must cease. I see that I was perfectly right in preserving some arms against you. You are certainly very dangerous."

"More dangerous than you think!" she replied.

He drew aside, seeing that she wished to pass him on her way to the door.

On the sill she paused.

"You will not give me back my letters?" she said, in clear, threatening tones.

Guy stooped and picked up the gloves which Marianne had tossed down, extending them to her, he said in a tone of most exquisite politeness:

"These are yours, I think."

Marianne took the gloves and as a last insult, in lieu of a slap on the cheek, she threw them in Guy's face.

"Miserable coward!" she cried with a sweeping glance of contempt. Lissac stood with his eye-glass dangling from his button hole by its rubber string, near the red decoration which Marianne had fastened on his breast. And this scarlet rosette blazed before Marianne's eyes, as she, pale as death and with trembling lips, passed out, the servant holding the door open for her. She threw herself into a fiâcre with but one idea in her head.

"Vengeance!" she said to herself. "Vengeance!"

"Where shall I go?" said the coachman, surprised at her manner.

She did not speak, she was thinking.

"Where shall I go, Madame?" repeated the man.

Marianne's face suddenly brightened with a flush of joy.

"To the Préfecture of Police!" she suddenly exclaimed.

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE RED RIBBON.

THERE was a great crowd at the Exposition des Mirlitons.

A long line of private carriages was in front of the door, and extended to the Place Vendôme. Well dressed and distinguished looking people elbowed each other as they came in and went out; exchanging cordial greetings, while the women cast furtive glances at the new hats which were either small plush capotes or huge Rubenesque felts, where the delicate Parisian features looked as if in the depths of a cabriolet. Lacqueys in livery glanced as a matter of form at the cards presented. Another lacquey distributed catalogues. Through an open door one could catch a glimpse of the large Salle, of a bit of gilding on the wall, of a bust on a tall pedestal, of marble and terra cotta groups.

Around both paintings and sculpture a crowd was pressing; men under tall hats by the side of women in heavily plumed Gainsborough coiffures. It was really impossible to see anything but people.

"A miniature *Salon!*" said Guy de Lissac aloud to an art critic, who was taking notes, "but one ought to be here by one's self to look with any comfort. I have

been for an hour trying to get near that Meissonier. It is stifling here, too. I shall come back another time." He pressed the hand which the critic extended, lead pencil and all, and then turned to make his way through the crowd. Pushed against and pushing, he smilingly apologized for not being able to disengage his arms that he might acknowledge his friends' salutations.

He finally succeeded in reaching the ante-room. He drew a long breath of satisfaction as he did so; around the room sat visitors who had either seen the pictures or, in no haste to do so, were sitting talking together. Guy mechanically straightened his cravat with a glance at the mirror as he did so. He did not notice that a tall man in a closely buttoned coat rose from the divan where he had been sitting and advanced toward him. This man touched Monsieur de Lissac lightly on the shoulder.

Guy turned expecting to see a friend.

"You are Monsieur de Lissac?" said the man, with all the courtesy of a gentleman.

"I am," said Lissac, considerably astonished at the manner of the stranger.

"Will you have the kindness to follow me, sir? I am the Commissioner of Judicial Investigations."

Lissac thought he had misunderstood.

"I must assure you," he said, with a faint, contemptuous smile, "that I do not understand."

"I am also a Detective," the other replied, "and charged to arrest you."

As the man spoke he showed the end of his scarf and his badge, while his voice and gesture, pointing toward the door, were full of courtesy.

"I have two of my men down stairs, but I do not believe that I shall be placed under the painful necessity of—"

"Upon my word, sir," interrupted de Lissac, "you must allow me to say that I do not understand your riddle. You will, I trust, explain it to me."

The tone in which Guy spoke, his manner and the smile on his face were calculated to prevent any one from imagining what was really going on between the two men. Guy was very pale however, and his somewhat haughty way of looking around seemed to suggest that he was in search of some friend.

He uttered an exclamation of joy as he perceived the journalist to whom he had made, fifteen minutes before, the remark in regard to Meissonier's pictures.

"My dear Brévans," said Guy in quite a loud voice, "I have an item for your paper. This gentleman proposes to arrest me!"

And he nodded toward the detective who had not moved.

"What are you saying, my dear fellow?

"Just what I mean," answered de Lissac.

"Permit me," interrupted the detective quickly and in a low voice. "Would it not be better to have no scandal, both for my sake and your own?"

He lightly touched as he spoke the bit of red ribbon in Lissac's button hole, as if to make him understand

that the cause of his arrest was there, and Guy suddenly flushed deep crimson and gave a pettish stamp on the floor.

"What an idiot I am! I am at your orders, sir!" he said, with a courteous bow to the Detective.

He bowed also to the stupefied journalist, and the Detective, with a salute to both gentlemen stepped aside, and either from prudence or politeness, allowed Guy to precede him.

Guy went through the corridor angrily gnawing his moustache.

No one in the whole crowd, with the exception of Brévans, had the smallest notion of what had taken place, or supposed that a man—a man of society—had been arrested in the *Mirlitons* when the Exposition was in full blast. It was incumbent on the journalist, therefore, that he should carry the news from group to group.

Lissac found at the door of the Club, on the Square, a fiâcre which drew up as soon as the driver saw the Detective. Two police officers, in the disguise of respectable shopkeepers, were standing talking to each other on the sidewalk. The Detective said to one:

"I need you no longer. Crabot is enough."

Crabot, who was a short, dark man, with a profile like a fox, seated himself at the side of Guy de Lissac, who had torn from his button-hole the rosette of the Portuguese Order.

"What!" said he, "is it really for this? Because I wear this decoration without having paid five or six

Louis to the Government? I have always meant to do so, but upon my honor I forgot it. It strikes me, however, that a petty question like this should not have subjected me to such an insult."

"I don't know very much about it," interrupted the Detective, "but a recent order has just been issued, published in the *Officiel*, which makes it illegal to wear Foreign Decorations. You do not read the *Officiel*, then?"

Guy shrugged his shoulders, as if he thought the question simply ridiculous.

He felt an absolute conviction, however, that under all this was a secret cause, a feminine machination, and involuntarily thought of Marianne. He vaguely remembered seeing her exchange smiles one evening at Madame Marsy's with the Préfect of Police. He remembered the enigmatic smile with which she had pinned the rosette on his breast and the caress of her lingering fingers. He wondered why the caress had not then and there ended in a scratch.

Could it be that Marianne had been audacious enough to organize this *coup de theatre?* No, there must be a mistake somewhere. It was simply the overzeal of some subaltern which had inflicted this brutality upon him. Perhaps he had been denounced at the Préfecture by some one of the many enemies whom a man makes unawares, for there are so many anonymous hatreds rampant in this great city.

Guy told himself that he would soon ascertain the truth. It would be known at the Préfecture, and of

course he would be told there. But he was very much mistaken; he was allowed to ask no questions, but was treated like any common rogue. He began to protest and lost his temper, then remembered, however, that it was best to submit to the iron teeth of these police. His pockets were searched, while he with difficulty restrained himself, and asked when he could be permitted to see the Préfect of Police, or the Chief of the Municipal Police, he did not care whom, any one who was responsible.

"You have my card—send my card to Monsieur Jouvénet. He knows me!"

No one vouchsafed the smallest reply. The Dectective by whom he had been arrested had vanished.

Guy was in the presence of those human machines who merely obey orders without the smallest sound, and care no more for protestations than for the wind that whistles through the corridors.

"Upon my word," said Guy, "I have done no wrong. I simply put in my button-hole this bit of red ribbon. It was a folly, but not a crime. Men are not arrested for a thing like that. I am willing to pay the fine, if there is one, but I do not wish to stay here with these wretches!"

Guy did his best to retain his usual manner, and to treat the affair as an accident, one only worthy of contempt, but his nerves did not permit him to do this, and he felt that in a few minutes more he should make some open resistance.

"I advise you to keep calm," said one or another of these men at intervals.

"Ah! that is very easy to say," cried Lissac. "Where is Monsieur de Jouvénot? I insist on seeing Monsieur de Jouvénet."

"The Préfect is not seen quite as easily as you seem to think," said one of the police officers. "Besides, you won't see any one now. You will have to wait."

"Wait! and for what?"

Guy de Lissac was taken to the door of a new cell which opened to receive him.

"Then," he said, with a nervous little laugh, "I am to be incarcerated, am I? It is quite like a melo-drama!"

He then asked if he should be soon examined. No one knew, and no one would take the trouble to answer. He could write—to whom? He could remonstrate—what was the use?

And then from the lips of the jailer, who seemed a good sort of man, fell the words:

"You are in secret confinement!"

What in the world did this foolish phrase mean? It was quite worthy of a melo-drama, besides, such a thing could never occur in real life. He would make a capital story out of the whole affair that night at the Café Riche when he went to his dinner. He was no longer irritated, for the whole thing struck him as too preposterous. That such a thing should occur to an old Parisian like himself was almost incredible.

The evening passed away and night came. A meal was brought in to Lissac. Evidently the joke, as he persisted in calling it, was to be kept up. He never

closed his eyes all night. He was almost stifled in the narrow cell in which he was immured. All sorts of projects of vengeance passed through his head. He would send a challenge to Monsieur Jouvénet. He would make himself heard through the public newspapers. He would have public opinion on his side.

Then his skepticism came to his aid and he shrugged his shoulders.

"Public opinion! It would laugh at me, that is all. I should be accused of having cut off the tail of my cat to make a commotion. Alcibiades himself would not be allowed in these days to do as much without the Society for the Protection of Animals instituting a suit against him!"

He waited until the next morning with the feverish anxiety of absolute sleeplessness. Of course he would be summoned for examination at the earliest possible hour. The whole day elapsed, however, without Lissac seeing a single face save those of his jailers. His irritation became unendurable.

Night returned, and in spite of himself, he did sleep a little, notwithstanding his intentions to the contrary. When he awoke in the morning he asked himself how long this was to go on?

That morning, however, he was summoned before the Judge, who, after reminding him that the law was positive and distinct in regard to the wearing of foreign decorations, announced that he was set at liberty by an especial order from the Préfect.

"That is to say," answered Lissac, in a towering

rage, "that the two horrible nights I have passed here are regarded as sufficient punishment for my crime. Unfortunately for all concerned I have been guilty of the merest peccadillo, and I assure you I shall bring a suit for illegal imprisonment and—"

"Let me advise you to be careful what you do," interrupted the Magistrate.

Lissac felt the greatest sense of relief when he left these cold corridors. The fresh wind of a gray November day seemed to him as soft as spring. He wondered if it had been weeks instead of hours since he left his rooms. He threw himself into a carriage and ordered the man to drive to his apartment.

"Already!" cried his Concierge, looking the very picture of astonishment.

This "*already*" troubled Lissac. What did it mean? The Concierge went on to explain that a report was in circulation in the Quartier—perhaps the good man had had his share in spreading it—that Guy had been arrested for complicity in a political plot. What sort of plot, other than it was political, no one knew; but the evening before, police agents had come to the apartment in La Rue d'Aumale and had examined everything there. They were evidently looking for papers.

"Papers!" cried Lissac. "Her letters, I am sure!"

He was no longer in doubt. He recognized the "fine Roman hand" of Marianne in all this. She had evidently made a bargain with Monsieur Jouvénet. The Préfect would lose nothing; Marianne would pay him.

"The miserable little wretch!" said Lissac, as he went up the stairs.

He rang, and his servant appeared, in quite as great a state of astonishment as the porter. The apartment was in the most appalling disorder. The valet had not dared to touch anything—he seemed to look upon the open drawers and scattered papers as made sacred by the majesty of the law.

Everything had been examined, every lock had been forced and piles of letters been taken away.

The little Italian cabinet where Marianne's letters had been, had all its drawers taken out, and turned over upon the floor, and the two letters for which the police were looking, without knowing in the least whom they were obeying, were no longer there!

"Ah! I will see Vaudrey at once," said Lissac, aloud.

"You will breakfast, first, sir—"

"Yes, as soon as possible; a couple of eggs and some tea; make haste!"

He was eager to get off. Was there a session that day? No.

Then he might see Sulpice before he left the Residence.

He hastened toward La Place Brida, looking for a carriage. He ran against a man who was smoking a cigar.

"Hallo! Monsieur de Lissac!" said this person.

Guy drew back instinctively, he recognized Uncle Kayser. Then, all at once, his long repressed anger

blazed forth, and he said, in a few vehement sentences, just what he thought of Marianne's infamy.

Simon said not one word at first; he was probably very sorry that he had spoken to Lissac at all.

Presently he stammered out:

"Did she really do that? Can it be possible! The little scamp!"

"And what else have you to say about it, Simon Kayser?"

"I? What can I say."

By this time he had regained his self-possession, and viewing the matter from the height of his artistic philosophy, he said:

"It is pretty severe, I must admit. It is not moral, but it has a good deal of individuality certainly, and, confound it all, individuality is something nowadays. I disapprove of the thing, of course. It is brutal and lacks ideality. I defy you to symbolize it. Love avenging herself on Love. Jealousy calling the police to her aid to triumph over defunct love! Such subjects would never do for painting. I could do nothing with them."

Guy had not a word to say in reply to this imperturbable moralist, and he regretted having lost his time in talking to him. He flung away now, eager to see Vaudrey.

The Minister was not in his cabinet. A clerk asked him if he would not like to see Monsieur Warcolier, the under-Secretary of State.

"I wish to see Monsieur Warcolier," said a man,

"Ah! my dear Guy!" said the Minister, his pale cheek flushing, "I beg of you—"

He sought some sharp, decisive phrase which should impose silence on Lissac, but could find none. He felt as if he had been struck a stupefying blow on the head. No, he had not heard one word of what Lissac had announced. And yet it had been the talk of Paris for two days. The newspapers, even those which had not given the initials of Guy's name, had told the story in such a way that he who ran could read.

And in a journal where Lucien Granet passed for a frequent contributor, a clever but perfidious article had appeared all about a certain Alcibiades (Lissac had been certain that this name would be given him) had been arrested by the orders of the Archon Sulpicios under the influence of a certain Basiléta, one of the most charming of the women of the Republic of Pericles.

Under this Greco-Parisian masquerade every one easily divined the real names, and saw under the masks, the true faces.

At the moment when Lissac came to call the Minister to account for the acts of the Préfect Jouvénet, Madame Vaudrey unfolded a number of this same Journal in which these names, travestied in the way we have described, had been lined by a red pencil.

The paper had been carefully addressed to Madame Vaudrey in a female hand, either that of Sabine Marsy or Madame Gerson!

Has not every woman one or more of such friends?

It was of Adrienne that Vaudrey thought, when he heard this somewhat brutal statement from Lissac's lips. Was Guy mad, he wondered, to speak in this more than audible voice in a room in this Hôtel with his wife not ten feet away?

"Yes," Lissac answered, he was mad, and he did not lower his voice, even when Vaudrey caught him by the hand and begged him to be quiet. He himself experienced, however, a feeling of intense rage. If what Guy said was true, Marianne had made use of her relations with him to induce Jouvénet to commit this infamy.

He said this in a few rapid words to Lissac.

"Bless my soul!" sneered Lissac, "are you so utterly innocent that you imagine for a moment that she won over your Préfect in that way? You do not know her. She bribed him after a very different fashion!"

Sulpice was absolutely livid, and looked at Lissac with a sudden fierceness as if this man had been his worst enemy. Guy in fact had struck him as with a dagger, full in the breast, without heeding either his vanity or his passion.

"Yes," said Lissac, "I understand how you feel, but it is as I say. I knew this young woman before you ever saw her. That she should bewitch others as she bewitched me only three days ago, that she should give herself to others as she did to me, is only natural to her; it is the rôle she has selected to play in life. I am somewhat of a fool, and I was properly punished,

that I am ready to admit, but to have me arrested only to gain possession of a paper which placed her too much at my mercy, is a little too much. She has induced you to commit in this way—for you must answer for your administration—acts of the most unjustifiable violence, which I will never forgive She believed that I would use this note against her. Did she take me, then, for a man totally without honor? Did she suppose that if I wished to commit an act of such baseness that I could not do it even without the arms which Jouvénet's agents stole from me? Could I not go to her Rosas without it, I should like to know?"

"Rosas?" asked Sulpice, his pale lips quivering under his blonde moustache.

"Yes, Rosas! Upon my word, Vaudrey, you look as if you were Minister of the Interior—of the Moon! Rosas is very probably her lover, but she can be his wife if she chooses—and she chooses!"

Poor Sulpice looked at Lissac with an affrighted air, which would have been droll if Guy had not had a very clear conception of the sufferings his friend was undergoing.

Vaudrey forgot whether Guy spoke loudly or not, or if Adrienne could hear him. He resolved to know all. He questioned Lissac now very closely, but Guy was afraid of saying too much, and simply repeated his demand that Jouvénet should be punished.

"As to Marianne, we can settle with her later!" he said.

Yes, certainly, Jouvénet should be reprimanded and

punished too, but how, Vaudrey did not yet know. But this arrest of de Lissac was the death-blow to the Prefect's rule; it was equivalent, in fact, to a resignation, signed by the Préfect himself. And Marianne? Did she take him, Sulpice, for a fool or a child?

"For neither—for a man who is very much in love," answered Guy.

Vaudrey had thrown himself into a chair, and sat with his arm on the table, nervously beating a little tattoo with his fingers.

"Will you listen to my opinion?" said Lissac, suddenly. "You have precisely what you deserve. Yes, I mean what I say; I tell you the precise truth. A man does not abandon a wife like yours for a woman like Marianne!"

"I love Adrienne from the bottom of my soul," answered Vaudrey, vehemently.

"And you deceive her constantly. It is a very stupid thing to do. You deserve that this Kayser should render you ridiculous forever, that she should deceive and ruin you, and that your name should be heard no more in the land. When a man has the luck to have a wife like yours, he should adore her on bended knees and not throw away his true happiness for a momentary intoxication. And such intoxication — Jouvénet has had the same dose at a lower price!"

"You abuse your privileges," said Sulpice, starting from his chair. "I do what I please, and as I please, and I owe no account of my acts to any one. I—"

He stopped abruptly, his feet nailed to the carpet

and his lips rigid and closed. His hand seized that of Guy, who himself shivered from head to foot as he beheld Adrienne clutching the frame of the door for support. She was deadly pale, and her eyes were distended as if with terror.

There was no possible doubt she had heard every syllable.

She said not one word, but came on with a slow, stiff movement.

Her affrighted, childlike eyes gave evidence of no anger; she simply looked crushed and bewildered. She was so sad that neither Vaudrey nor Lissac ventured to speak.

A dead silence fell upon the three.

Guy tried to smile as Adrienne came up to the table where he stood. She stopped him with a gesture which said, "do not try to deceive me again." She held in her hand the Journal that had been sent to her, and showing Vaudrey the marked article which spoke of Sulpicios and Basiléta, she said gently in a faint voice:

"What does this mean?"

Then, as if her strength had all gone with this last effort, she dropped on the sofa where Sulpice was seated, and a long shivering sigh followed by a sob went directly to Guy's heart. Sulpice looked up at his friend. Guy instinctively pressed his hands on Vaudrey's shoulder, and said in a low voice:

"Down on your knees, man! The woman who loves, forgives!"

Sulpice threw himself at Adrienne's feet, while Lis-

sac quickly opened the door and departed. He knew very well that he was of no use here, and that only Vaudrey himself could win Adrienne's pardon.

"What with my anger," he said to himself, "and his jealousy she was forgotten. It was both stupid and cruel." He went away greatly displeased with himself and also with Vaudrey. Again he said to himself that this man was stupid beyond belief to deceive a woman like that—a woman who adored him. He was not certain that he was not in love with Adrienne himself. Ah! had he been loved by such a creature, he felt that he might have achieved great things. He would have been a very different man and he would have been faithful to her from the altar to the tomb.

In all her trouble she was more lovely than he ever remembered to have seen her; so much so, that he felt an entirely new sensation, almost like jealousy, toward Sulpice, and this was why he had suddenly departed after pushing Vaudrey toward his wife.

But her sad face followed him.

"Ah! what an unfortunate fellow that Vaudrey is!" thought Guy.

As he passed through the hall he was obliged to wait a moment to allow huge baskets of flowers and plants of parti-colored foliage to be carried past. These were the decorations for the Salons. Yes, he remembered now, there was to be a fête that night. These flowers following so quickly on the frightful discovery made by Adrienne, struck Guy as a terrible

sarcasm, and he almost thought their joyous beauty an insult.

Would Adrienne have the courage to appear that night? Had she strength to receive?

Guy was vexed with himself that he had disturbed Sulpice that morning, of all others.

"It would have been better had I had the sense to keep my wrongs to myself, and then this poor woman might never have known!"

"Pshaw!" he added, after a while, "she's goodness itself—she adores Sulpice—it is a passing storm. She will forgive him!"

He determined to return that night and see if he could not serve Adrienne in some way. "I am, perhaps, not altogether evil, for though I am sure that I love her, I honestly wish that idiot, Vaudrey, to love her, too!"

"She will forgive him," Lissac had said, but Lissac, who thought he knew her sex so well, did not know this woman who concealed so much energy under her childish face and figure. She was a little country-bred creature who was bewildered by Paris, and who, so to speak, was blown away by the tempest of political life, and at the same time was madly in love with her husband, whom she thought absolute perfection. Guy did not know that in this sensitive nature there was great firmness, and much enthusiasm under her coldness. That notwithstanding all her good sense and her calmness she was capable of extravagances.

Adrienne had read the Journal without at first

understanding why it had been sent to her. Alcibiades, Basiléta, conveyed no idea to her. Suddenly her attention was arrested by the name of Sulpicios. Could it be of her husband that they were speaking? A strange pang contracted her heart. But it was foolish to allow herself to be troubled by this newspaper article, which was quite as contemptible as an anonymous letter. She would not think any more of it.

She had beside many arrangements to make for the evening. There was an official dinner to be followed by a soirée. As to the dinner, Chevet would manage all that. There was at these Ministerial dinners a fixed price—so much a head as at a restaurant. Host and guests were treated alike.

Adrienne, therefore, had only the responsibility of the musical soirée, and she began to look over the programme and make some changes in the arrangement of the flowers in the vases in her salon. In spite of all her efforts, she could think of nothing but that wretched article, whose every line shivered before her eyes as does the air when one looks too long and intently at a burning brazier.

She determined to go to Sulpice and ask him frankly what the article meant.

"I hope," she said, with her thorough contempt for falsehood, "that he will not think I suspect him, for it would not be true."

She went toward the little cabinet where Sulpice worked and where he read sometimes after breakfast, and then, as if she had thown herself on a naked sword, these words pierced her heart:

She heard Lissac say, "Your mistress!" and Vaudrey let him say it!

She heard the name of Marianne Kayser. And this was the woman of whom she had heard Sulpice speak so often, and always with so much indifference. She remembered Marianne's startling beauty. This was the woman then for whom Sulpice deceived her. No! it was not true. And yet, why had they sent her that horrible article.

She was tempted to enter the room abruptly, throw herself between these two men and interrupt their conversation. She had not had the strength however. The reproaches uttered by Guy were precisely those that she herself would have spoken if she could have found words to speak. She was conscious of only one thing now, and that was of her own sufferings.

She permitted Vaudrey at first to take her hand, which hung cold and lifeless, in his. Then she gently drew it away and shrank bank with an instinctive movement of insulted modesty.

Vaudrey tried to speak. And all at once confused words, foolish excuses, awkward falsehoods, words absurdly cruel, "*caprice*, *folly*, *passing fancy*," fell from his lips. Finally he could say no more. Adrienne's silence silenced him. He extended his hand to take hers which again she refused.

"You will never forgive me," he said finally, without well knowing what he said.

"Never!" she answered coldly.

She had risen, and as energetic now as she had before been faint and feeble, she crossed the floor hastily.

"Are you going away?" stammered Sulpice.

"Yes, I need to be alone, entirely alone," she said, with a movement of repulsion, almost of disgust as her husband went toward her.

He stopped, and then said, almost unawares:

"You know that this evening—"

"Yes, yes," she replied. "You need not be uneasy. I am still the Minister's wife, although I am no longer Madame Vaudrey."

He tried to speak, but could think of nothing to say.

Adrienne had already disappeared.

"And with her all the happiness of my life!" groaned Sulpice, seeing the abyss yawning before him. "Ah! how miserable I am! And it is all my own fault!"

He opened his books and examined his papers, restraining himself with difficulty from either seeking the presence of Adrienne, or going to Marianne. He wanted to say to the latter that she had been utterly false to him, that she was no better than the large number of unfortunate women in Paris.

It was possibly more of Marianne that he thought on this long, wretched day, than of the Adrienne whom he had insulted, while his wife moved about like an automaton, asking herself from time to time if it were really she, who was trying on her ball dress, and who, with apparent carelessness, abandoned her head to the coiffeur, and who in two hours time would be forced to greet these Senators and other guests with a smile and courteous words. It seemed to her that she

was the victim of some frightful nightmare. She felt a strange desire to cry out with sudden shrieks. All her tender nerves were on the stretch, and yet she imposed on herself the command to show no evidence of suffering and even determined, which was vastly harder, not to suffer, and to wait before she gave way to her sobs.

That evening, the façade of the Ministerial Residence was all ablaze with long lines of gas which imparted to the Hôtel Beauvau an air of a public fête. High up the letters H F gleamed against the dark blue sky. The gas fell upon the tri-colored flag floating in the breeze. Carriages rolled up to the door. Men in correct evening costume, women wrapped in heavy cloaks trimmed with fur or with gold braid, entered the anteroom, their dresses rustling past the Guards of Paris, who stood in lines, their white uniforms relieved by the rich colors of the back ground of dark leaves. As the ladies dropped their cloaks they gave one brief glance at the enormous mirrors. A lacquey asked the name of each guest and gave it to a *huissier* who, in a loud voice threw it into these salons where had been heard so many names of all parties and under all *régimes*.

Then on the threshold of this crowded salon, illuminated with the most brilliant light, the Minister was seen bowing and smiling perpetually to people whom he did not know, and whose names he scarce heard. Behind the Minister were his Secretaries, young men in white cravats, taking their part in the salutations paid to the Minister.

A little on one side, pale and smiling like the vision of another world, was Madame Vaudrey, who also bowed and mechanically extended her gloved hand. She was very pale, her dress was white satin fastened on the shoulders by pearl agrafes, on her breast she wore a large bouquet of natural tea roses.

When she saw Guy she gave him a faint, sad smile. He hastily shook hands with her, as if eager to show her that she might rely on him to do all he could to aid her.

Where other guests saw only fatigue in Adrienne's weary face, Lissac read her sufferings and understood her agony. He made his way through the salons. Diamonds sparkled on the shoulders of the women like crystals on the chandeliers. Framed by screens of old Gobelin tapestry an improvised stage appeared. The light toilettes of the women already seated before this stage made a mass of pale blue, white, and tea rose color. Amid the dazzling whiteness of gleaming shoulders, of glittering diamonds, of graceful heads dressed with roses and tufts of feathers, Guy instantly saw Madame Marsy, in a pale blue robe cut extremely low in the neck and wearing a quantity of flowers. This lady, as she slowly fanned herself, examined her former friend, Madame Gerson, with impertinent hauteur.

Madame Evan was also to be seen—all the men admired her, and all the women imitated her.

Behind this feminine parterre the men in their black coats were massed, their sombre effect being occasion-

ally lightened by some officer in uniform or by some foreign attaché. There was a profusion of decorations and of bald headed savants who wore the red cord about the throat. Deputies, uncomfortable, as was plain, in their new clothes—young attachés of the Ministry or of the Diplomatic Corps who, with their opera hats under their arms and in the most correct of evening costume, all held in one hand the satin programme of the evening's entertainment. Under the ceiling painted with clouds, amid all these flowers and this blaze of light, this crowd had a very odd effect.

Mingled with the music were whispers and the rustle of silk.

Guy looked around at the guests, he was a man who had seen much and who compared. Once in a while he saluted some acquaintance, but as he did this very rarely he was especially pleased to see Ramel, whom he had often met at Adrienne's Wednesdays, and who really seemed to enjoy them.

He thought Ramel was looking far from well.

"You are right," said Ramel. "I came because it was necessary for me to speak to Vaudrey most seriously."

"About what?" asked Lissac.

"Oh! nothing. I merely want his advice on one point. There is a great deal of dissatisfaction felt with the President."

"By whom?"

"By most of these people here."

"His guests, do you mean?"

"You know when one invites all his friends, he finds as a rule that two-thirds are enemies!"

"More than that, I think," said Lissac, grimly.

He moved about the rooms, but continually returned to the door, near which Adrienne stood pale and with thoughts very far away, scarce hearing the names announced by a *huissier* with the regularity of a machine.

She had resolved not to flinch in the performance of her duties that night, nor to allow the despair that wrung her heart to show itself in her face, on which only smiles should be seen. She once had a fever and in her delirium felt, she remembered, much as she felt this evening. It seemed to her that all was unreal about her. The men in their white ties, these women in their rustling silks, all bowing low before her with almost the same expression on their faces, affected her like a succession of phantoms. She could give a name to no one of these persons whose smile was official or whose gravity was correct.

She felt strangely weary, her head was heavy. She was conscious of the weight of her eyelids, and she wondered if her strength would carry her through the evening.

The distant music, an orchestra playing Strauss waltzes, was a mocking accompaniment to this dreary nightmare.

"And among all these women who are assembled here to-night," thought Guy de Lissac, "there are some who are jealous of her, and many who envy her."

Adrienne never once looked at her husband. She was afraid, if she should once meet his eyes, of losing her self-possession and bursting into tears there before the whole world. It would have been most ridiculous.

She therefore, with a strength of will that was most astonishing in so frail a looking creature, seemed not to know that Sulpice was in the room. She whispered to herself, over and over again, "Be strong; you can weep as much as you please when you are alone, far from this crowd—alone—alone forevermore!"

Vaudrey, excessively pale but gratified, in spite of himself, by receiving all that was most distinguished in France—Foreign Ambassadors, the President of the Senate and that of the Chambers, all the Ministers, the Deputies and the Financiers, all, in short, who counted for anything in Paris that day—forgot for a brief period the shock of that morning, the thunder-clap that had burst over his head and shattered forever the hearthstone of his home.

He thought of nothing but of what he saw before him, of the homage which he, the obscure advocate from Grenoble, now Prime Minister, was receiving.

And all at once, as if he had forgotten everything in the joy of gratified ambition, he became absolutely livid, and turned quickly toward Adrienne, whose very lips were white. The *huissier* had in a clear, ringing voice uttered a name precisely as he had all the others, but it sounded to Vaudrey and his wife like the blast of a trumpet.

Guy de Lissac started.

"Monsieur Simon Kayser!" cried the *huissier;* "Mademoiselle Kayser!"

Then came another name:

"The Duc de Rosas!"

But this last name neither Lissac, Vaudrey, nor Adrienne even heard. Sulpice made a movement to go to Marianne to beg her to go away at once. He had invited her, to be sure. She was determined to come there, and show herself at this Ministerial fête, notwithstanding the persuasions to the contrary made by Jouvénet, who knew the truth, and suspected that many others knew it too. Vaudrey had begged her to stay away. He had even written her within the last two hours, imploring and finally ordering her not to come. And here she was.

She entered on her uncle's arm, he with a disdainful smile on his bearded lips, and she with an unusually haughty carriage of her head.

Again Adrienne asked herself if she were dreaming. She saw this insolent woman slowly sweeping toward her—superb in a black satin robe, the waist a mass of jet, and across the bust a wreath of large red roses.

The fair, haughty face, crowned by masses of russet hair, seemed to brave the pale creature, the wife she had injured, who leaned against the doorway for support.

The vision, for it was a vision, glided nearer and nearer, like the nightmare of some feverish dream, and Adrienne felt that the eyes were fixed on her own. Behind Mademoiselle Kayser was the Duc de

Rosas, his face, usually so pensive, now lighted with a gay and happy smile. Madame Vaudrey did not see the Duc. She only saw this woman who had courage to brave her here, to insult her after having mortally injured her.

Adrienne grew hot all over in the impotence of her anger. Could she submit to this? She looked about her instinctively, seeking aid, support or counsel.

Vaudrey's deathly pallor—a supplicating gesture from de Lissac, recalled her at once to the dreary facts of the case. It was true, she had no right to make a scandal. She was not at home. She was at the Ministerial Residence, in a Salon where this woman had as much right to be as the other invited guests.

It was not her own wounded vanity or breaking heart that she must now consider, it was the reputation of her husband that was at stake. She was on the stage, so to speak, and no false note nor false step could be permitted. Constrained to smile, with death in her soul, forced to feign and to wear a mask for all that crowd, to lie, in short, to these guests—enemies, as Ramel had said, many of them—who were only too ready to sneer and hiss, she determined, then, not to yield to her natural impulse, but to control every look which should show what she felt. She closed her eyes. When she opened them Marianne Kayser had made her bow and passed on through the crowd that opened before her with a murmur of admiration.

Adrienne had not seen the insolent smile with which this woman bent before her, nor had she caught sight

of the jealousy which leaped to Vaudrey's eyes when behind imperious Marianne he beheld José de Rosas with his look of happy triumph. Had the poor wife seen her husband's face at that moment, all her forced composure would have vanished. Guy saw it all, and saw only too clearly the intense vanity of this man, who between these two women, one whom he had deceived and the other who had deceived him, felt less pain at the grief he caused his wife than at Marianne's treason.

Lissac was thoroughly exasperated. He wanted to rush between Marianne and Rosas and say to him:

"You are mad to come here with this woman! You are mad and also ridiculous. She has deceived you as she has deceived me—as she has deceived Vaudrey and many another better man."

He was directly in Marianne's path, having placed himself there intentionally. She did not seem to recognize him, except that her smile became somewhat disdainful, and dropping her uncle's arm she took that of Rosas, as if to be sure of her Duc.

But Guy could not make a scene at this Ministerial ball, where such an occurrence would have ruined Vaudrey's public career. He had whispered in the ear of his hostess only a few minutes previously "Courage!" This became also his own word of command. Yet he now went in pursuit of Jouvénet, as he could not rest until he had said in a low voice to that Préfect of Police just what he thought of him.

Jouvénet, however, had come and gone. Granet, as if he knew for whom Lissac was looking, surveyed

him with a covert sneer and murmured to Molina, seated near him:

"Alcibiades!"

Lissac went from group to group trying to discover some one with whom he would like to exchange ideas. He saw the same persons whom he was in the habit of seeing at Madame Marsy's or at Madame Gerson's and heard just what he heard there. He wandered into the concert room and listened to the music for a few minutes, and then left the room. He saw a group of men standing around an old gentleman whose breast was covered with orders. He heard this person say with the gravity of an English statesman:

"I must say I prefer solos always. I myself took lessons of Lavassor."

"Of Lavassor, Your Excellency?" answered a chorus of small bald-headed young men—diplomates.

"Yes, of Lavassor," replied the old gentleman, who was the celebrated Ambassador of a great foreign power—"I was famous at one time for singing '*L'Anglais qui a le mal de mer.*' And while the young men smiled and warmly applauded, the old Ambassador, to whom was confided the interests of a people, began to hum in a low voice the first verse of the song in question.

Guy de Lissac shrugged his shoulders. He had heard much said of this man, and had wished to know him, but his lack of dignity filled Guy with contempt. "Where am I?" he asked himself, "at a Ministerial ball in Paris, or at one given by some sub-Prefect in provincial France?"

He had heard Warcolier utter a few minutes before these sarcastic words:

"If I were Minister I would amuse my guests with fire-works, they are at once martial and inoffensive."

The voice of a young man with a Russian accent came to him from a corner:

"I come," said this person, "from a singular country; from the Baltic Provinces where the government is carried on by Deputies who are born with the right of making the laws, and I consider that politics are so abominably fatiguing and irritating that we ought to be thankful that there are people condemned to put their hands into this rancid pâté while others are allowed to read, talk and think."

"I am very much of the same opinion!" said de Lissac to himself as he turned away. He could think of no one but Adrienne. How that poor creature must suffer! She had now left the doorway in which she had been standing from the beginning of the evening. She had mingled with the crowd and hoped to find in the music and gay laughter, the forgetfulness she craved.

She had taken a seat among all the women who scrutinized her toilet and pale face. In front of the improvised stage she discovered unfortunately, that directly across from her was Marianne, whose Titian like beauty and snowy shoulders were well displayed in her black dress.

Adrienne, do what she would could not keep her eyes away from this beautiful woman—who seemed desirous of attracting her attention by a laugh or movement of her fan or a whisper to Sabine Marsy.

Adrienne's anger momentarily dulled, and her grief, which she for a time had repressed, were again awakened by the sight of this creature. She felt that her senses were leaving her, and that she could no longer answer for herself as she looked on those painted lips which Sulpice, her husband, had kissed. Suppose she should start from her chair and say to this woman:

"Depart! You are the lowest and most degraded of your sex. Depart!"

"What if she should do this! What would happen? Why should she not do it? Why should she be braved and insulted in this way merely because she had a title and official position?

She fancied she heard whispers behind the fans about her, and felt that these women knew her secret and her woes.

Why should they not know it? All Paris had read that cruel, cutting article in the Journal. There were people in her salon that night who knew it by heart, who carried it in their pockets.

Her husband did not know of what she was capable. He thought her insignificant because she was gentle—resigned because she thought first of him and his glory. How gladly she would have died for him! How gladly lived for him in poverty and oblivion; how willingly she would have toiled for him with her slender white hands, if he had but loved her, or even if he had not lied to her.

And here was this woman sitting before her. She was beautiful and powerful, and had evidently gained

an ascendancy over Sulpice, and would induce him to commit follies if not crimes.

"And these are the women whom men love. Ah! fools! Fools that we are!"

The first part of the concert was over, and it was well that such was the case, for Adrienne was stifling. It was incumbent on the Minister to thank the opera singers, the actresses from the *Comédie Française* and the other artists whose names appeared on the programme.

Vaudrey was obliged to make his way through the rows of chairs in order to reach the small salon which in the rear of the stage is used as the *Foyer*. Adrienne saw him coming toward her, and noticed his pallor and constrained smile. As he passed Marianne he turned his head away, but she calmly extended her feet, and thus stopped him, and her smile when he involuntarily looked at her, was inconceivably charming.

Adrienne felt strangely dizzy. She turned to leave the salon, then stopped, for she found she could not walk. She felt some one draw her hand through his arm, and she heard the words:

"It is too much, is it not?"

She recognized Lissac's voice.

Guy looked down upon her with infinite pity in his eyes. He had been watching her for some time, wishing to come to her assistance, but scarce knowing how to offer it.

"Take me away!" she murmured, "I can bear no more!"

She was mad to fly from all this noise, from this stifling atmosphere, from Marianne's glances and from her smiles, which went like daggers to her heart.

She cared not whither she went and allowed herself to be guided by Lissac, who took her to a small salon at some distance from the official salons. She had ordered that no one should be admitted there and that a servant should be stationed before the door. Some instinct had warned her that she should need this retreat during the evening when every naked nerve was at its uttermost tension.

Lissac whispered to Ramel as he passed:

"Tell Sulpice that Madame Vaudrey is ill!"

"Ill?"

"Look for yourself."

Adrienne entered the small salon where candles were lighted, and sinking into a low chair covered with wine colored satin, threw her head back on the cushions and gasped for breath. Then, leaning forward a little, she clutched the two arms of the chair, and looked down on the carpet as if studying its designs.

Guy stood near her biting his lips and fuming internally at Vaudrey's mad folly, and at that miserable Marianne.

"She merely obeys her instincts! but he—"

"Yes, it is too much, too much," said Adrienne, as if Lissac's words had only just reached her. It seemed to her that she had been contaminated—it was hideous, it was vile! She realized for the first time that there were many things in life from the sight of which she

had hitherto been happily preserved. Now she saw clearly—she understood many things that had puzzled her. She remembered Vaudrey's repeated falsehoods.

"And he lied to me!" she said to herself softly, over and over again.

She remembered the care with which he had kept all the newspapers from her, the innumerable night sessions of which he had complained, and she had pitied him; she had told him not to kill himself for politics. She recalled the smiles on the lips of her guests on her Wednesdays, smiles which they had quickly hidden under their muffs when she spoke of those same night sessions. How these Parisians must have laughed at her, laughed at her credulity in thinking herself beloved when she was so grossly deceived. What things Sabine and Madame Gerson must have said in their salons about this silly little Provincial who knew nothing of life!

She knew she had been ridiculed, as well as tortured, but the wounds to her vanity were as nothing compared to those of her heart!

Why had they ever left Grenoble and their dear little house on the shores of the Isère? He would still have been her own had they remained there. It was Paris that had robbed her of him. Paris! How she hated it now! She hated the reputation which had thrown Vaudrey into power, and politics which had transformed the man of honor whom she adored into the liar and traitor that he was.

"I loathe these very walls!" she said suddenly to

Lissac, and she extended her arm toward the wine-colored hangings.

"My life was over when I entered this place. Ah! what a world of infamy this is! I loathe it all, I tell you. I perceive the odor of falsehood everywhere!"

"Did you hear her? She laughed! She is happy, she! And I—alas!"

As Adrienne uttered these words she rose from her chair. All her energy seemed to have returned to her, brought on by the strains of an Hungarian waltz from the salon where Marianne was still displaying her beauty.

"I hate this place, this noise, these women!" she cried; "this crowd around the supper table, the look of a restaurant, these false smiles and treacherous words. I hate them all! It seems to me that every one here laughs at me, and has smiles only for this courtesan. Who brought her here?"

"Her uncle and Monsieur de Rosas."

"Monsieur de Rosas?"

"Who is to marry her."

Adrienne laughed shrilly; the sound was as painful as if it had been the shriek of a mad creature.

"Who is to marry her. Do men marry such creatures? Do such women become wives, honored and loved by their husbands? Is it because they are easy in manners and morals that they are considered more amusing than the rest of us, who are only honest women? I thought Rosas was a man of great wit and cleverness. Suppose I should go to him and tell him of the relations that had existed between this woman and my husband—what would he say?"

"He would not believe you, and you would never do that, Madame!" said Lissac.

"And why not?"

"Because it would be a mean act, and you are the best as well as the noblest of women!"

He had gone up to her, and was gazing intently into her face.

A little troubled at his expression, she lifted her clear, honest eyes to his.

"And what has my goodness done for me in this world?" she asked. "It has only caused me to be more readily deceived. Ask all these men which of us two they most admire, Mademoiselle Kayser or myself. I do not mean which of us two is most beautiful. I speak of our characters."

"Ah! Madame," said Guy earnestly, "we men are not so bad as you think; they one and all bow down before you, and have for you the most profound respect."

"Yes, we have respect. But she! Ah! she has love, and I wish to be loved!"

"Yes—by him!" said Lissac, half aloud, his hands at the same time seeking those of Adrienne. Her slender fingers trembled in his grasp.

Never in his life had he felt such pity for any woman.

"Yes, loved by him," answered Adrienne, with the distracted air of a shipwrecked mariner who sees his last hope vanish with the fading sail.

She had been so happy! She had believed herself

so loved, and now she had nothing to remember but the cruel falsehoods told her by Sulpice.

"Do not speak of him to me again," she suddenly exclaimed. "I hate him now — nay, I do worse, I despise him. I never wish to see him again. Do you hear?"

"What can you do?" asked Lissac.

"I do not know; I should like to go away somewhere. I can never go back to that ball room; I can never receive any more of those guests whose smiles are as insulting as if they slapped me in the face. I must go away!"

"Adrienne!"

"And I will go at once!"

She did not seem in the least astonished at his calling her Adrienne, which Guy had instinctively done.

She did not know what she said, as she talked on pantingly.

"I will go now, during this ball. I will leave him to this solitude—to this woman—if the man whom she is to marry, will give her up to Sulpice."

She was becoming very much excited. Her nerves were now taking their revenge for the tension to which they had been condemned.

"I am going!" she cried. "I will never see him again!"

"Where will you go?"

"To Grenoble — I don't care where. Take me away, Monsieur de Lissac," she continued, putting her hand on his arm, entreatingly. "I shall go mad here!"

She had unconsciously taken refuge in the arms of the man who loved her.

He was certain that Adrienne was not thinking of him in any way, and yet, for one brief moment, Guy, skeptic as he was, was very near committing the greatest folly of his life.

Madame Vaudrey never dreamed of what was going on in the heart of this young man, but he knew that though this woman did not love him, she would become his, if—

"You are feverish, Adrienne!" he said, taking her hands as if she had been a child.

"I am stifling here. I must go. Take me away."

"You are mad," answered Lissac, peremptorily. "They are calling you even now."

"Let them call! Is it because they call that I must go? Do you not see that I am disgusted with all these people—that I detest as much as I despise them. Take me away."

Lissac looked earnestly at her for a moment; he was very pale.

"Do you know, Madame," he said, at length, "that you would not have taken two steps in the street on my arm than your reputation would be gone?"

"It makes no difference to me," she answered, bitterly, "it is not women with reputations who are loved."

"I beg your pardon, Madame. I love you, and I venture to tell you so because you are a good woman, and I have no right to take you away, because—I love you!"

He had done his best to utter these words coldly, although they sprang hotly to his lips.

But it was done. Adrienne drew back.

He loved her!

Therefore it was impossible that she should leave the Hôtel with him.

She looked at de Lissac intently. He was still very white. She extended her hand and, suddenly recalled to herself, said:

"You are a good man!"

"Occasionally, perhaps," answered Guy, with a sad smile.

The door opened, and Ramel appeared.

"I have sent for a physician!" he said.

"For me?" Adrienne asked, "oh! I am much better."

Then going up to Ramel, she said:

"Will you take me to la Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin?"

"And why?"

"Because I cannot stay an hour longer in a house where my husband has a right to receive his mistress. Monsieur de Lissac refuses to accompany me. Give me your arm, if you please, Ramel!"

"Madame," said Ramel, gently, "I knew that this gentleman was a man of great cleverness, it seems to me now that he has also a good heart. You ought to remain here, for your own sake as well as your husband's. It is your duty. And as to Mademoiselle Kayser, you can return to the salons for she has gone with Monsieur de Rosas."

"Adrienne stood with her sad eyes fixed on Ramel, then, shaking her head, she said:

"You knew it, then? Everybody knew it?—except me."

"Yes," answered Ramel, with a kindly smile, "and now, my child, you must forget it."

"Never!" said Adrienne.

She took Ramel's arm, and without even one glance at the mirror she returned to the salon.

"Your flowers, Madame!" said Lissac, in a trembling voice—he was still very pale.

"Thanks!"

And Adrienne pinned to her corsage the roses that had fallen, and, without daring to look at Lissac again, she moved away with Ramel.

Guy was left alone in the salon.

"Poor little soul!" he said. "If I had been young enough not to understand where her madness might lead me, or corrupt enough to take advantage of it, what a terrible thing this evening's work might have been! I sincerely hope this good action will be credited to me!"

He stooped to pick up a rose that had dropped from Adrienne's bouquet.

He laughed as he looked at the flower.

"A man can be a school-boy at any age, I suppose," he said to himself, as he placed the rose carefully in his vest pocket. "This, at all events, will not be searched for by the police."

CHAPTER XV.

CLOUDS IN THE SKY.

RISING the next morning after a couple of hours of feverish sleep Sulpice felt as if he had lost all that was dear to him. This vast Hôtel was as silent as death. He did not dare go to Marianne for he did not know what to say to her. He went slowly down stairs, passed through the salons still decorated with flowers whose beauty had perished. Leaves broken from the shrubbery lay scattered over the polished floors. The furniture was all awry and uncomfortable. He seated himself at his desk and with heavy eyes began to examine the papers which lay piled there.

There was nothing new, the usual despatches and reports from the daily Press. All was going well and there was no story to tell.

The Minister was still absorbed in his work when Warcolier entered, and in his usual solemn manner began to utter his well-rounded periods. He came to announce to the Minister that there was in the horizon something important, possibly disquieting. Granet was preparing a bombshell to throw into the camp. He intended to request an explanation—on a matter of no consequence to be sure—only about a procession which

had taken place at Taibas with some noise. It was a mere pretext of course. Old Henri de Prangins on the lookout for a portfolio believed that Granet meant to have a new Cabinet of which he should be Prime Minister.

"Well! What have I to do with all that?" said Vaudrey indifferently.

Granet! Prangins! these names did not interest him in the least—Adrienne knew all and Marianne had deceived him—she was about to marry Rosas.

Warcolier was very grave and showed his surprise at the lack of interest evinced by his chief. Did Vaudrey intend to give up the ship in this way? Did he believe Granet to be so sure of success, then? and had Vaudrey taken his precautions in that direction. A sovereign contempt for this man entered the lofty soul of Warcolier, the friend of success.

"You do not appear to see, sir," he began.

Vaudrey rose suddenly from his chair in one of those outbreaks of passion which were not unusual with him. He struck the table violently—his open portfolio lay upon it.

"I see," he said vehemently, "I see that Granet wants that portfolio—let him take it if he can!"

"That is the proper spirit to show, sir, a man's talents are often renewed by contests and——"

"Yes, I agree with you," answered Sulpice hastily.

The Minister, desperate at seeing all his personal happiness crumbling around him, was only too glad to find something to arouse him from his apathy. To

hold his own against Granet would be an interest and a diversion to his thoughts.

"Let Granet do what he will," he said to Warcolier, "let him ask an explanation from us in a week, to-morrow, or to-day, even—I am ready!"

Vaudrey asked himself if he should now go to see Adrienne. No—for what could he say to her—it was much better to let a little time elapse before he saw her. Then, too, if he wished to cut the ground from under Granet's feet he had not many hours in which to do it.

And yet he with difficulty interested himself in this duty, over which a few months ago he would have been prodigiously excited. The honeymoon of his love for power was over. He had experienced, one by one, all the annoyances and disappointments of this position which he had desired so much, *that he might do good*, as he sincerely believed. From the beginning he had been constantly thwarted by routine — old ideas — petty ambitions and intense selfishness.

He had supposed that he could make such changes as he pleased and institute any plans of Progress that he liked; instead of which he found himself tied to a worn-out machine that smelt of rancid oil, by which the state was drawn along with many halts. By degrees profound discouragement and lassitude had taken possession of this man who had been so eager to amend abuses and to whom his colleagues and older statesmen, even the President himself had said:

"Be slow and sure, no innovations; things have

gone on in this way for some time, why change them? They are well enough as they are."

Vaudrey was now placed between his dearest dreams and the most crushing reality. It was not reforms that were asked of him, it was places. It was not Progress that these men, who had their country in their charge, wanted, it was the realization of their own plans, the advancement of their own interests. Everybody wanted something, and Vaudrey felt an absolute contempt for these people. He felt, with a thrill of terror, that France threatened to become a vast market—a nation where everybody wanted positions from men who, in order to keep what they themselves had, promised everything.

Ministers thus became the vassals of the Deputies, who, in their turn, were the servants of their Electors. All were held in a vast network of bargaining.

Above and beyond all this Vaudrey was struck with the hatred of true talent, the intense selfishness and the narrow minds of the people about him.

Under the Empire when the startled Emperor, feeling that he stood alone, was looking for a man whom he could trust, Vaudrey remembered having heard the story of that bell at the Tuileries specially intended to warn the Chamberlain of the arrival at the Château of a new face—of the visit of some unknown person. In that way the whole suite hearing the peculiar sound, were at once put on their guard and got rid of the new comer, who might become a support to the master, but a danger to the servants. Sulpice, to be sure, had

never heard this invisible bell, but he divined its presence as he saw the eagerness with which every unknown face was watched. He felt that its secret wires ran all around the Ministerial Residence and around all such men as were in power, howsoever brief that power might be.

He remembered something Ramel had once said to him: "Why struggle for a place in the sunlight? the best people are in shadow." And he remembered with intense pain what he had said when first coming into power:

"I wish to be, I mean to be a great Minister!"

"I was a jackass!" he said aloud. "A Minister is a Minister, and that is all there is to be said about it. We shall, perhaps, soon have an opportunity of seeing what Granet will do, but I know beforehand he will do nothing!" And Sulpice laughed nervously.

There was a Cabinet meeting at the Elysée; he must go. He went there, but like everything else in this hour of disgust—disgust with all things and with himself, the Palace looked mean and common. A *huissier* in a black coat and white cravat was, as usual, in the ante-room, his shoes all white with the dust of these carpets on which so many feet had trodden.

Gas blazing in broad daylight, as it does in London offices, was reflected from the cold and shining walls. Swinging doors of red baize trimmed with brass nails, swung noiselessly to and fro. He saw the usual number of weary-looking applicants sitting about on the velvet benches.

The sound of electric bells near or afar off alone broke the stillness of the place. Vaudrey was the first to arrive, and he watched the routine of the morning work with but a vague feeling of interest.

A soldier came in with a dispatch; the *huissier* gave a receipt. A man of military aspect, tall and handsome, with his coat buttoned to his chin, passed through the room with a respectful bow to the Prime Minister; then Jouvénet, the Préfect of Police, with his lawyer-like air, advanced toward the Minister. Vaudrey returned his salute very coldly, thinking of Lissac.

"I wish to speak to you, Préfect, after a while."

"Very good, your Excellency."

To the Guard at the door this was all that took place. They had but a small idea of all that was concealed under these two brief sentences.

It was understood at the Council that Granet would not ask for his explanation until the next day, and Vaudrey had, therefore, time to prepare his statement of facts. In the meantime, however, Granet asked some unusual question in regard to some financial matter—some of the Ministerial expenditures—Vaudrey at once took fire and determined to make it a personal matter. This Granet begged leave to state in reply that "his colleague and friend, the Prime Minister," had totally misunderstood his question.

On the whole Vaudrey was glad when the Cabinet Council was over that day, and he had time to think how he would calm Adrienne, and possibly win her

back. He asked, on his return, if Madame was ill. No, Madame had gone out.

In reality the poor wounded heart had sought refuge, and gone as one goes to a cemetery, to the apartment in la Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, which was the tomb of her lost happiness; on the door should have been written "*Here lies* ———"

She did not wish to see Sulpice, but that evening consented to speak to him.

Her pale, sweet face looked worn and sad.

"Your explanation is made for you. Tell the truth. Say that I am ill, as is only too true. I shall leave to-morrow. I have written to my uncle, who will give me a place in his house, which is all I ask now from any one."

"Adrienne!" murmured Sulpice.

She closed her eyes in mortal agony. His voice caused her still another pang, but she made no movement, and uttered not one other word. She was like an automaton. Even her eyes when she opened them, were totally void of expression. They seemed to have been drowned in tears.

"I hope," she said, after a few minutes, "my resolution will place no obstacle in your path and do you no harm in your political career. I will do my duty to the extent of my ability. But no one will know whether I am in Grenoble or in Paris. People do not trouble themselves much about me."

He tried, with an eager gesture, to retain her as she moved away, but she had vanished, and Vaudrey felt

that between this woman and himself an impassable wall had risen. He had only Marianne to love now.

Marianne! Yes, poor fellow! He was much to be pitied, for he still loved that woman. He felt most pity when he thought of Adrienne, more anger when he dreamed of Marianne, but one thing was certain, the thought of his wife leaving Paris did not disturb him half as much as the idea of Marianne becoming the Duchess de Rosas.

He would go to Marianne that same evening.

He was told at her door that Madame was at the theatre. "And with whom?" he asked. No one knew. Vaudrey despised himself for interrogating Jean and Justine. He knew very well that as soon as his back was turned these servants would laugh together at his jealous questions.

"Fool that I am!" he said to himself. "No woman save Adrienne ever loved me!"

Feeling thus acutely, he was yet capable of making the cool calculation, that Adrienne's anger gave him for the time absolute liberty, which he could devote to Marianne if Marianne would have him.

He had written to Mademoiselle Kayser, but the letter was unanswered. He said to himself that he would go the next day to the Hôtel of Mademoiselle Vanda. He must wait however, until after the session, which threatened to be a long as well as a decisive one, inasmuch as the fate of his Cabinet hung upon it.

The morning's resumé of the journals seemed on the whole favorable to the Vaudrey Ministry, "with the

exception," it said, "of some few intolerant organs which were of little importance." Vaudrey did not remember that it was almost in the same words that just previous to the fall of Pichereau the daily *resumé* had spoken of the Pichereau Cabinet.

"I shall have a majority of sixty votes," he said to himself, "and all will be saved—except Honor!" He thought of Adrienne at this moment.

The Session, however, undeceived him most cruelly. Granet had skillfully prepared his grounds for attack. The Vaudrey Cabinet was menaced on all sides, without Sulpice having suspected it. Granet had promised places right and left, and also agreed to consolidate others. He therefore came to the Session that morning with a compact battalion of clients, all devoted to his interests, which were theirs. They did not reproach Vaudrey for not having given all he had to give, Préfecture, Sub-Préfecture and decorations, but his power had lasted too long. Vaudrey must fall, in short, less because he deserved to fall, than because others were impatient to succeed him. Granet was tired of being the "*future Minister*." He wished to play his part at once. He felt certain that the country was already weary of Vaudrey's compromises, and wanted a more homogeneous Ministry.

Who could say anything in the face of a word like that. These five syllables were the best weapons he could possibly have had. The Vaudrey Cabinet lacked Homogeneousness.

"Is Granet homogeneous, then?" asked Sulpice,

laughing heartily as he sat among the other Ministers, while Lucien Granet addressed the Tribune, with his right hand in the breast of his coat.

No one smiled, however, but himself. His colleagues felt that they were threatened as well as he, and his usual claqueurs had deserted him and applauded Granet.

Monsieur Le Ministre felt that his death warrant was signed. He was an ex-Minister already, to all intents and purposes.

Granet's interrogatories were enveloped in forms of the most exquisite politeness—"castor oil in orange juice," as Sulpice said, doing his best to bear up under what he saw was coming.

At the end of the session the votes were taken, and the Vaudrey Ministry was defeated by a large majority —122 votes.

"One hundred and twenty-two Deputies," he said aloud in the corridor, "to whom I have refused the nomination of some Mayor, or the appointment of a *garde champêtre*."

Warcolier observed, in his dignified manner, that such a remark was deficient in that elevation of character which leads a man to bear defeat nobly.

Vaudrey now had only one thing to do, which was to send in his resignation. He was defeated, absolutely defeated. He at once returned to the Hôtel Beauvau, and after writing his letter he went himself with it to the Elysée and handed it to the President, who accepted it without the smallest emotion, as if it had

come from any ordinary employé of the Government. He said a few cool words of regret, and shook hands in a limp fashion—that was all.

Vaudrey then went back to the Ministerial Residence and issued orders to his servants that all should at once be put in order to leave the Hôtel.

"When must everything be ready, Monsieur Le Ministre?"

"To-morrow," answered Vaudrey, in whose ears this title was now a mockery, and grated upon his nerves. He sent to Adrienne to ask that she should receive him.

She was sitting at a Davenport writing, when he entered the room. She looked hardly able to sit up, and her skin was like wax in its whiteness.

"I have news for you," said Vaudrey. "I am no longer Minister."

"Ah!" said she.

She did not even start, and she uttered not a word of sympathy. She would have rushed to his arms three days before, exclaiming:

"Now we shall be happy once more!"

But now she sat in utter indifference.

"We shall leave the Hôtel Beauvau at once!" said Sulpice.

"Yes, I was going," she replied. "My trunks are already packed."

"You will, if you please, go from here with me, and return to the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin in my companionship. You can go from there to Grenoble, if

such be your wish. But I especially desire that there will be no scandal. Appearances must be consulted, remember!"

She listened coldly. Her heart was hard, and she heeded not the emotion in his voice.

"Precisely!" she answered, "appearances must be consulted. I will wait, then, before I go."

Sulpice was astounded at the coldness and firmness of this gentle creature, this woman whom he had often called his child-wife. In her presence he was now ill at ease. He did not know whether to throw himself at her feet and tear an unwilling pardon from her, or leave her and go to Marianne. No, it was not Marianne whom he wished to retain, it was his poor Adrienne. Would she ever forgive him? He could have knelt at her feet and bathed them in his tears, but her icy coldness was more than he could bear. He was afraid, afraid of her—this gentle creature!

He left her, and as he went down the stairs he said to himself that he would go to la Rue Prony soon after dinner. He had in the meantime many things to do, that all might be in order for his successor.

He had more than one pang to suffer in seeing persons to whom he had promised places come hurrying in, all out of breath, to implore him to sign their nominations while he was still Minister.

Crows hovered about the dead body already!

Vaudrey had been told at the Elysée that his successor would be Granet, which was, of course, just what he expected, but he was none the less irritated

at hearing this realization of his fears. And Granet was to retain Warcolier, having bribed him with the promise of the first vacant portfolio.

"Ramel was right!" thought Sulpice.

He immediately turned all his energies to that which is almost as dismal as a funeral procession—to moving. He packed his books and papers with his own hands. He was eager to escape from the scene of his dethronement and ruin, although, as he said to himself, thankful to get rid of many daily annoyances.

Adrienne left this great Hôtel with almost the same sense of deliverance she would have experienced on going out from the walls of a prison. A bad dream was over. She could lay aside her official mask, weep at her ease, pity herself as much as she chose, and take flight to that beloved Dauphiné which had been so dear to her in her youth. She would leave to-morrow. Dr. Reboux would be expecting her, and would ask no explanation.

After having done all that was necessary for him to attend to personally, Sulpice went out on foot. At first he walked very fast, and reached the Seine almost without knowing it. He looked at his watch—it was eleven o'clock. Marianne must have been waiting for him a long time.

He met no one; the Quais were absolutely deserted. On the Place de la Concorde, where the pavements were muddy and wet with the dampness of this November night, he stopped for a moment to look at the Palace of the Corps Legislatif, a sombre mass. The

Avenue of the Champs Elysées was defined by two long parallel lines of gas lamps. He was not in the least interested in these things, and he did not know why he stopped to look.

He continued his walk toward the Parc Monceaux. The solitude of this spot pleased him. As he passed a long row of lighted windows at the Club he involuntarily shrank back. He looked through the bare branches of the trees into the rooms and saw a chandelier, red hangings and some picture frames, and he imagined that the men were all discussing his fall.

"They are laughing in there and saying very clever things about me, to-night, and yesterday they were besieging me for places! So goes the world!"

He continued on his way without hurrying; the *Café concerts* were deserted and looked dismal enough, though he remembered them gay and attractive in summer. He passed the Elysée.

A Sergeant who was pacing before his sentry box, with his hands lost in the sleeves of his heavy overcoat, looked at him suspiciously, wondering who could be loitering there at such an hour.

"He has no idea who I am," said Sulpice, "but yesterday he would have bowed to the earth before me!"

The windows of the Elysée still blazed with lights, and the ex-Minister said to himself, "He has probably received Granet and Warcolier, to-night."

Before the large door on the side of the Faubourg Saint Honoré four tall lanterns were burning, under-

neath which a guard with his gun on his shoulder was walking up and down, the light glancing on the shining leather of his shako. A group of police officers were talking together with a weary air. A red carpet was laid over the steps, and Sulpice vaguely wondered if it was the same on which he had trodden with so light a heart the first day that he descended from his carriage with the portfolio under his arm.

He hurried on and soon found himself in the Place Beauvau. He looked up at the tall gate, now closed, through which he had so often driven in his coupé. He knew that he should never again cross that threshold, save as a petitioner. His memory recalled the every day scenes which had made on him so little impression at the moment. He heard the cry of the lacqueys:

"The Minister's carriage!"

He entered the carriage; it rolled toward the Bois. Now all this was over. Another occupied the Hôtel, ate at the same table, slept in the same bed and ordered the same servants!

He had a strange feeling as if he had been robbed, and this Granet, who had been sent there by a vote, seemed to him a filibuster and an intruder.

"How easily one becomes to feel at home in new places!" said Vaudrey, half aloud.

He had forgotten, in some degree, this wound to his vanity when he reached La Rue Prony. There was still a light in Marianne's window. To see this woman once more, to take her in his arms, would be a solace

for all his woes. Marianne's love was worth a hundred times over, all the joys which Power could give.

Marianne Kayser was evidently expecting Sulpice. She received him in her brilliantly lighted salon. She wore a dressing gown of red satin trimmed with a profusion of lace, from which her arms and throat emerged with pearly reflections.

Vaudrey took the hand which she extended. In a tone that struck him as most extraordinary, she said:

"Well! How goes the world with you now?" She pointed to a newspaper on the floor. "I read strange news there."

"Yes," he replied, "but what does that matter? I think only of you when I am with you!"

"My dear," answered Marianne, "your pet sin has always been to think of two things at once. I hate politics, and never want to hear a word about them; but it seems that it is Granet who has taken off your head!"

"Precisely!" said Sulpice, smiling. "Your phrase is a good one."

"My phrases are all good. I use those of my day. But why is it that I must read the newspapers to hear of you? Now I intend to tell you something before you see it in print."

"Something that will interest me?"

"Perhaps—but which, I at least find interesting!"

"Is it a great piece of news?" asked Sulpice, twisting his blonde moustache nervously.

Guy was right; he knew what was coming.

"I am inclined to believe that I know your news, my dear Marianne!"

"Tell it then," she said, as she folded her beautiful arms across her breast.

He endeavored to think of some brutal phrase which would crush her to the earth, but he only felt a mad longing to take that lovely head in both his hands, and press one long, lingering kiss on that bewitching mouth.

Marianne smiled in a mechanical sort of way.

"It is true, then," cried Vaudrey, "you love Monsieur de Rosas?"

"Upon my word! you are wonderfully resigned. Is it because you have ceased to be Minister, I wonder."

"You love Rosas?"

"And I am to marry him. I have the honor to announce my marriage with Monsieur le Duc José de Rosas, Marquis de Fuentecarral. I am myself very much astonished, but it is true all the same. I have seen days when I had not six cents for an omnibus, and now I shall be a Duchess. You do not look pleased! Surely, you are not so selfish as all that, are you?"

She was lying back in her chair, with a mocking smile on her lips.

"Now, my dear fellow," she continued, in a clear voice, playing as she spoke with a ring on her finger, "you probably understand why I wished to see you to-day? I wanted to say to you that I hoped we should always remain good friends—in a spiritual

sense, you understand — and that the Duchesse de Rosas will always be glad to see you. But if you hope to find in the Duchess one spark of love—and you are quite capable of such folly—you will find yourself wofully mistaken. In that case, I should prefer never to set eyes on you again. I wish to lock up my Past and lose the key. Do you understand? And now, good-night, Sulpice."

Poor wretch! he saw a woman whom he had never seen before—her manner, even her voice were new to him.

"Do you wish to drive me mad, Marianne!"

"Now what a romantic, extravagant question that is! For Heaven's sake, correct yourself of that habit—it is as bad in Love as in Politics."

"Marianne," said Vaudrey, suddenly, "do you know that I have sacrificed my home, and broken my wife's heart entirely for your sake?"

"Did I ask you to do either, let me inquire? I pleased you, you pleased me! What more did either of us want? I did not wish to break any one's heart, and if you were simple enough to let things be known, yours is the blame, not mine. But as I do not intend to break my husband's heart,"—she smiled as she emphasized the words "my husband"—"I do not choose him to know or suspect these facts, and I intend to bid you adieu, now."

She extended her hand. He did not take it.

"What! Sulky?" she asked.

"I love you," he cried. "I love you, and I intend to keep you."

"No! no!" she answered, with a laugh, as he put his arm around her, "no more of that."

"I intend to keep you," said Sulpice, basely, "whether you are married or not!"

"For what do you take me?" exclaimed Marianne, drawing back. "If ever I have a husband, I intend that he shall be respected. A man who gives you his name has certainly the right to demand that much."

"Then you mean that we shall never meet again?"

"Only in public."

"You drive me away?"

"No. I merely say good-night to a friend."

"Ah!" said Vaudrey, starting to his feet and pacing the room like a caged animal. "You are a thoroughly unprincipled woman! Guy has told me the entire truth. You gave yourself to Jouvénet in order to be revenged on Lissac. You laugh at me now, as you laugh at Rosas. What have I not done for you? I am ruined, utterly ruined!"

"My dear," interrupted Marianne, very coldly, "I want to call your attention to the difference existing between a gentleman like Rosas and a little Bourgeois like yourself. The Duc would gladly have ruined himself for me, but he would have been incapable of reproaching me. A man should never talk of money to a woman. You are a very good sort of man in a domestic way, and you were born to adore your wife, but you are not of the stuff out of which a chivalric lover is made."

"Ah! if I had only known you sooner!"

"Yes, it is a pity. But I am wiser than you in many things. You are worried about that note in the hands of Gochard?"

"Yes," said Vaudrey, "but—"

"You would not like me to take it up with the Duc's money, I suppose? You do not care to have Monsieur de Rosas pay your debts, I presume?"

"Marianne!" cried Sulpice, choked with rage.

"You talk to me of money," she answered angrily. "You whine over your ruin. You sing a perpetual *De Profundis*, and of course you have some meaning in it all. I have asked myself what it can be. I know you are in financial difficulties, and I have spoken to a person who understands how to pull men through such matters."

"You have spoken to some one about me?"

"Oh! you need not be so angry. It was only to Molina. You know him."

Sulpice saw the round, full-moon face of the Banker as Marianne asked this question, and remembered the morning that Molina had entered his cabinet.

"Molina is a man of resources," said Marianne. "If you want money you can get it of him. And now, once more, let me beg of you to leave me to my new life. Good night, and farewell."

She extended her hand to him with so strange a smile on her exquisite lips that he caught that hand and kissed it, madly, passionately. She drew it away and rang a bell by the side of her chair.

Vaudrey turned away humiliated and furious.

"Show Monsieur Vaudrey out," said Marianne to Justine, when the woman appeared, "and then you can go to bed, I shall need you no more to-night."

Vaudrey went away in a rage. She had treated him, him who had paid for the chair in which she sat, as a Duchess might have treated a hireling who had been lacking in respect. He was almost inclined to laugh.

"It was well done, too," he muttered. "Her manner was superb. But what a fool I have been! To trust a *fille*—to trust Warcolier, to trust everybody—everybody except Adrienne."

He mechanically took his way to the Hôtel Beauvau, forgetting that he no longer had any right there, and that the lacqueys might even drive him away. By degrees the recollection, which had been pushed aside for the last three days, of that debt, large enough in the beginning, but which had been augmented by successive notes, and which must be paid by Dec. 1st, now returned to him. For sometime he had been very anxious. At first when he could count by months instead of weeks to the day of payment, he could dismiss the thought at will. He relied, like a gambler, on some stroke of good luck. He had several farms at Dauphiné—a word to his lawyer and he would be set right, but now all was changed. He had calculated that with economy, his salary as Minister, and his private income would enable him to pay this Gochard note. But Marianne's exactions, the continual demands of Parisian life, the impossibility of saving anything, took away the money he was trying to accumulate. He

wrote to his lawyer, who informed him that the mortgages on his farms now nearly covered their value, but that Vaudrey need feel no anxiety, as Madame Vaudrey's fortune was amply sufficient for their needs.

Adrienne's fortune! This then was all that remained to Sulpice, and in this was his only safety. But no matter how bitter were his needs, Sulpice felt that he could not pay Marianne's debts with his wife's money. No, that was impossible!

Vaudrey felt his head swim at the thought of his double defeat. Marianne's insulting laugh rang in his ear. He would write to Gochard and ask for time. This Gochard was a usurer, of course, and certain of future payment, would be very glad to renew the note at higher interest.

As soon as this letter was written, Vaudrey mailed it himself.

Adrienne was to go that night. He tried to turn her from the plan. She did not even reply, but sat with her eyes fixed on the chimney piece, where in a crystal vase was a bunch of those Christmas winter roses, fresh and snowy, sent from Dauphiné that day.

"Then," said Vaudrey, "it is decided — you will go?"

"Yes!"

"In three hours?"

"In three hours."

"I know where those roses were gathered," said Sulpice, softly. "They grew under the window from which we used to lean and talk together."

"Yes," answered Adrienne, whose voice had the dull sound of a cracked vase. "We had some lovely dreams, but we were quickly undeceived!"

"Adrienne!" he murmured.

She did not reply.

He put his arm around her waist, saying to himself as he did so, with a pang of remorse, that he had done the same to Marianne an hour previous.

She recoiled.

"Do you remember," she said coldly, "one day when we talked of divorce, I told you then, there was one simple way of obtaining it, which was never to see each other after the day when faith and confidence were killed. You have deceived me—all is over between us! I am a stranger to you forevermore. Were I a mother, it would be different, for I should have certain duties to fulfill. For the sake of my child, I would have borne anything. But I have no such duties, and no such consolations. I am a widow, although you are living. So be it, then. You wanted a divorce. You have it."

This was the third time since Adrienne knew the truth that he had tried to say "forgive me." But now he realized the uselessness of such an appeal. This bruised and sensitive nature had wrapped itself in an impenetrable vail. He could only humiliate himself without touching her. No, she would never forgive him.

Vaudrey went into his Cabinet, where the books and papers brought from the Ministerial residence were heaped on the floor in all the disorder of moving.

The servant who brought in a lamp also brought a tray heaped with cards in envelopes, cards of condolence. One large card lay on the top of the tray.

"That gentleman is here," said the servant.

"Molina!" said Vaudrey, every tint of color deserting his face. "Show him in!"

Solomon appeared, breathing very hard. He dropped heavily into a chair.

"Well! how are you?" he said. "Not too much knocked up, I trust. It is only a change of Ministry. You will be in again soon. But, after all," he continued, "I don't like these perpetual changes. I get accustomed to saying "your Excellency" to one man, and lo! he is carried off. I have about made up my mind to use that title in future only when I address one of the Government clerks or the *huissier* at the door."

He accompanied this remark with a loud "Ha! ha!" and then changing his tone, he said: "But I come on business."

He looked Vaudrey full in the face with his gimlet-like eye, as he took from his note case a small printed sheet.

"This," he said, "is an occasion when your title of Ex-Minister will be more useful to you than that of Minister. You have heard of the new mines in Algeria? Read that!"

Vaudrey took the paper. It was a very clever Prospectus of a Gas Company in Algeria. It promised marvels to subscribers. Only three millions were asked from the public.

"They might as well have said six," interposed Molina, "they would have got it!"

"And do you want me to subscribe to your Gas Company?" asked Vaudrey.

Molina laughed at this.

"Not much!" he answered; "I only wish to give you the opportunity of making your fortune!"

"In what way?"

"Just as you please. I have several other plans to propose if you do not care to take up this. You, in return for my efforts in your behalf, will allow me to print your name on the list of Directors—Monsieur Sulpice Vaudrey, ex-President of the Council."

Vaudrey looked the Banker full in the eyes.

"You will be in good company, at all events!" said the Banker, as he rapidly read to Sulpice the names of Deputies and Senators, Statesmen and Financiers.

Sulpice knew them, nearly all.

And despised them all. Was this what Molina called good company?

"And this affair, you are certain that it is what it promises?"

"The fact is," answered Molina, lightly, "he who risks nothing has nothing! In war a man risks his life, in business it is his money!"

Vaudrey asked himself if he should tear the Prospectus into bits and fling them into the Banker's face.

"My dear Vaudrey," continued Molina, "you can be of great use to us. A former Minister is always a former Minister. You are not rich, which proves your

honesty, though in America—and we are rapidly becoming Americanized—it would only prove your stupidity. But rich you can become. I have the opportunity of making you so, and you of being useful to me."

"In a word, you buy my name?"

"I hire it, if you say so, at a good big price," and Molina laughed again.

"I see," said Vaudrey, "that you did not understand, on the other occasion when you came to me to talk money, that I was on the point of asking you never to come again—"

Molina interrupted Sulpice by rising quickly from his chair. He divined that harder words were coming. He parried them skilfully.

"Nonsense!" he said. "Look at the Prospectus. Read the names on the Directors' Board. Take time for reflection. It never hurts any one to take every possible advantage of circumstances. It strikes you as strange that I should make this proposition to you, does it? Well! write down your name between those of Pichereau and Numa de Baranvilles. It is as simple as good morning. You think you will be the only one, I suppose. Yes, they all do at first. Now there is Monsieur de Montyon; I will wager that Montyon will not be mealy-mouthed about it if he is allowed to handle the certificates of stock."

"Do you really think so?" asked Vaudrey, now as pale as death.

"I know it. It is foolish to have any false shame in

such affairs, but I have plenty of other things on hand. You can choose, if you will, from among them. I will open a credit of two hundred thousand francs for you as soon as you say the word."

"I leave you these papers," added Molina. "Don't be concerned, that Prospectus is quite as true as others. You need not go down with me, I know the way. Good night!"

He disappeared, and Vaudrey heard the boards in the ante-room creak under the Banker's hippopotamus-like feet.

Sulpice—the unfortunate Sulpice who had dreamed so many fair dreams, so many great dreams, dreams of Liberty, Progress and Virtue, of Civic Regeneration, of National Improvement, of Education of the Masses —this Vaudrey, overtaken by punishment of his vices, stood there dumb and dizzy, before the dark abyss yawning before him, gazing at the Prospectus lying on the table. His name! Put the name of Vaudrey, which he had hoped to read below so many noble laws and resolutions—put it on this paper among names of speculators and unprincipled jugglers! Had he fallen that low?

To lend himself?

To sell himself!

And yet if he did not do this how could he pay that note—the Gochard note—the price he had given for that woman's kisses!

Sulpice felt that it was impossible for him to see or judge clearly at present. One thing alone was plain

to him, he had one hundred and sixty thousand francs to raise and Molina had now offered him two hundred thousand. This Credit seemed to Vaudrey like a placer from which he had only to scratch away the earth with his finger-nails. The unctuous voice of the rich Banker repeated over and over again in Vaudrey's ears,—"they all do it!" It was not then after all such a serious matter as he supposed—this "letting" of his name, as Solomon had called it. Who, beside, would pay much attention to what he did in this matter at a time when the most shocking things were regarded with equally shocking indifference.

"They all do it!"

No, notwithstanding this statement from the lips of the Banker, Vaudrey, in his heart, believed there were some consciences which resisted. He had been brought up in a very different school, but he had been demoralized by association with Marianne. Alas! it is only too true that women have been most powerful agents in the general corruption of our times. She makes our politics by annihilating our political men. Vaudrey, however, was going out of power unencumbered by debts, with the exception of this one note, and how was he to pay that?

Through Molina! of course!

This huge triumphant Jew was right after all. It was folly to be fastidious and reject the dish extended to you. To be rich was better than to be powerful. For money remains, that at least is tangible, nothing else is so in this world. Was there any sense in a

man refusing a proffered fortune for a mere scruple of conscience? Besides, was not business the very life of the modern world? Molina managing capital and placing stocks was quite as useful as those persons who pulled political wires and inculcated ideas.

"His Algerian gas is a work of civilization like any other!"

And by degrees, driven to the wall by the need of escaping this debt, which strangled him like a noose, Sulpice Vaudrey had arrived at a certain sophistry of reasoning, which was, so to speak, a capitulation before his own honesty, a cowardly coercing of his conscience. His name? well! they could have his name if they thought it worth anything. The journalist who sells his thoughts, the sculptor who sells his statues, the romance writer who makes merchandise of his experiances, also sell their names and for money. Before him like a living response and a remorse, rose the pale face of Ramel as he last saw him sitting in the sunlight near the window of that little room in la Rue Boursault.

He drove the thought away, and said aloud:

"Well! what of it! Ramel is a saint—a hero, I am no saint, I am a man and must live!"

He took up the Prospectus that Molina had left and read it over and over eagerly, seeking a pretext for his acceptance—for if he did accept, it was all over.

With his eyes fixed on that paper Sulpice did not see a woman in a travelling dress standing in the doorway of this dimly-lighted Cabinet. She stood still a

moment to look at this unhappy man, every line in whose face was clearly shown by the shaded lamp under which he sat. Then she slowly went up to his chair. She coughed slightly, for she would not touch his shoulder even with her gloved hand, or address him by name.

Vaudrey turned quickly, pushing aside Molina's Prospectus with an instinctive movement, as if ashamed to be seen with it in his hand.

His face flushed when he saw Adrienne.

He read in his wife's attitude that her resolution was unalterable. She had come to bid him farewell. She was going.

He had not energy enough left even to attempt to retain her.

"Do you intend to become Molina's associate?" asked Adrienne, in a clear, steady voice.

"How do you mean? Molina?" stammered Vaudrey.

"Yes; he understands business. When he left you he requested permission to present himself to me. He thought I still had influence enough to induce you to make—as he phrased it—your fortune. He told me you needed money. And, after having been skillful enough to tempt the husband, he had the audacity to offer me a set of emeralds if I would advise you to accept his offers."

"Did the scoundrel dare do that!" cried Vaudrey.

"I thanked him," answered Adrienne, coldly, "and told him I was not aware you had debts and regretted

that you, in order to pay them, were obliged to accept such propositions. He then informed me that he was doing you a great favor."

Vaudrey uttered an exclamation of disgust, and taking up the Prospectus he angrily tore it into bits.

"We shall probably never meet again," said Adrienne, in a harsh voice that contrasted strangely with her usual gentle grace, "but I shall never forget that I bear your name, and this name, yours as well as mine, must be respected."

She extended a paper to Sulpice.

"This is a Power of Attorney signed by me. You are to pay every fraction of your debts. I do not wish to know how you contracted them, I only desire to hear that you have paid them, as my signature enables you to do."

Choked and gasping for breath, Sulpice rushed toward her.

"Adrienne!" he cried.

She withdrew her hand.

"You owe me no thanks," she said. "I am simply a partner who saves the honor of the house. Such a connection is far better than one with Molina!

"Farewell!" she said abruptly.

"And you are going!" murmured Sulpice, his voice quivering with emotion.

"And whose fault is it?" she asked coldly.

Adrienne was no longer the timid little country girl with blushing cheeks and shy eyes. Sorrow and disillusions had petrified her. Sulpice realized fully that to ask mercy of her, were to ask in vain.

Time alone could soften this woman's heart. Adrienne's very voice told him this distinctly.

"It is agreed between us," she said, calmly, "that we shall have no scandal and no scenes. We are not judicially separated, nor even separated in appearance. It is merely that we choose to live apart, and no one need know the reason of this complete rupture."

"Adrienne!" groaned Sulpice, "it is impossible—you shall not go!"

"No entreaties can change my resolution," she replied. "I am in haste to leave Paris. It seems to me that I can no longer live in this atmosphere of falsehood and infamy. Again I say farewell!"

"Very good!" said Vaudrey, "go then! But if we part as strangers, I can accept nothing from you. Take back this paper."

"No. I will not take it back. Keep the name you have given me, honored and respected at least, by the world. To betray a woman, to insult and ridicule her, does not dishonor a man. No one but myself has the right to aid you now. Leave me this privilege which I claim. I do not wish to see in Molina's toils—his slave and his puppet—a man who has been my husband!"

"You have hurt me enough. Spare me this last insult! Farewell!"

She left the room, and he allowed her to go. He heard her descend the stairs, followed by her maid. She entered the fiâcre at the door, and he had not the courage to follow her. The fiâcre rolled away, and the wheels seemed to crush out his very life.

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"Ah! How miserable I have been!" he said, "and how unhappy I shall be!"

He rushed to the window and threw it wide open, regardless of the cold November wind that swept through the room, and leaning far out sought to discover in the crowd of carriages, the fiâcre that bore Adrienne away.

He saw a carriage afar off encumbered with trunks.

He uttered one sharp, appealing cry, heedless of the fact that it was drowned by the noise of the streets:

"Adrienne! Adrienne!"

No—the fiâcre disappeared in the fog.

Sulpice hurried down, and going into the street hailed the first carriage he saw and drove to the railroad, with the hope that he should find Adrienne.

"Quick! Quick!" he repeated over and over again to the coachman.

The man whipped his horses and the windows of the fiâcre rattled like hail.

Vaudrey reached the station too late. The train had been gone twenty minutes. He had remained too long at his window.

"It does not matter," he said to himself, sadly. "She would not have forgiven me! She will never forget!"

Sitting in a corner of the car that bore her away, with her veil closely drawn over her face, and eyes closed, Adrienne sat choking down her sobs. She held in her hand the half-faded Christmas roses sent her from Grenoble, and among the ever-recurring

phantoms which haunted her weary brain, she saw Lissac's pale face and heard Guy say again:

"It is because you are a good woman that I love you!"

"A good woman!" she murmured, "and why could he not have loved me, too?"

She was thinking of her husband whom she should never see again, and whom she loved no more.

"I am a widow, now," she added, "and a widow who will never love and never marry again!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DUC AND THE DUCHESS.

ALONE now, in Paris, desolate and forsaken, crushed with regret over his ruined life, Vaudrey's days were endless and his nights sleepless. Devoured with ennui, he one night went to the Opera to distract his thoughts.

Aïda was played that night with a débutante who was announced as a star.

Sulpice Vaudrey—since Adrienne's departure two weeks previous—wandered about Paris like a lost soul. He went to the Chambers, occasionally, but uncomfortable there, with all the consciousness of a man who has played his little part on Life's stage and failed, he now went to the theatre to kill an evening.

It was a superb house, in every sense of the word. Proscenium boxes sparkled with diamonds and flushed with roses. Every stall was occupied by some celebrity.

It so happened that in this great city of Paris, Sabine Marsy and Madame Gerson, who hated each other, sat almost side by side. The pretty little Madame Gerson occupied and filled with her babble the *loge* of the Préfect of Police, "No 30." In the background sat Monsieur Jouvénet. She talked very

loudly of her Salon, her receptions and her friendships. She crushed Madame Marsy with a relation of her triumphs. Monsieur Gerson slept, as usual, at the back of the *loge*. Madame Gerson began to laugh when she saw Sulpice in the orchestra chairs.

"Bless me! There is Monsieur Vaudrey. He has still a crushed and mournful air!"

And she then related to her friends who crowded round her in her *loge*, admiring her bust, well shown by the way in which her dress was cut, how Vaudrey had come near dining with her the very evening of his enforced resignation. "He did not come, of course," she said, "and it was very annoying. But how is one to know? We ask the Secretary of the Prime Minister to dinner. We write it all out on a card. He comes—and how does he stand? He is no longer Secretary, the Prime Minister is no longer Prime Minister. There is no Prime Minister. I assure you it is all a great inconvenience to the lady of the house."

She laughed rather loudly, and Madame Marsy, half dethroned, fanned herself nervously, and leaning forward, examined the house through her glass, pretending not to see her old friend.

Vaudrey, with a fatigued air, sat back in his orchestra chair and looked around the house. He was astonished not to receive bows and smiles as of yore, but consoled himself with the recollection that human nature is so made—success commands respect and deference. Why should he be troubled?

His lorgnette rested first on Madame Marsy, then on

Jouvénet, and then on Madame Gerson, and while stirred by the memories aroused by these familiar faces Sulpice suddenly started, for in sweeping the house with his glass, it had suddenly rested on Rosas and Marianne.

He saw before him between two enormous columns, from the summit of which looked down gigantic, smiling faces, this woman whom he had loved, whose memory still filled his heart. She—adorably pale in a white robe—leaned toward Rosas, her soft hair loosely piled above her brow and held by a diamond arrow.

Her remarkable beauty, her jewels and her blonde coloring stood out from the dark background of the *loge*, where, like an enormous cyclops eye, glittered the round window in the door.

Rosas, with his thoroughly Castilian face, almost tragic in its type and paler even than Marianne's own, sat beside her. His thin, thoughtful face was supported by a slender hand on which blazed an enormous emerald.

De Rosas was absolutely motionless. She, on the contrary, frequently leaned toward him and whispered a word or two in his ear, words which Vaudrey easily divined, and which brought a happy light to José's sad eyes. And when she leaned back in her low chair the waist of her dress disappeared behind the front of the *loge*, and Sulpice saw only her lovely face, her white throat and whiter shoulders.

Vaudrey was seized with a strong temptation to go up to this *loge*, wrench open that door, and shout to

this man who had not yet given his name to this woman:

"You do not know her! She is Falsehood and Profligacy incarnate!"

Behind Rosas and Marianne, Vaudrey caught a glimpse of a bearded face above a white cravat. This belonged to Uncle Simon.

Sulpice, while the Egyptians defiled upon the stage, did his best to turn away from these people, but he could not do it. In spite of every effort he continued to watch Marianne, who did not appear to have seen him.

The curtain fell and he wandered into the Coulisses, less because it was his wish to go there than because he desired to escape from this most irritating sight. The machinists were rolling away the tall flies, and dragging back the great white Sphinx, and taking down the canvas on which tall palms were painted.

Sulpice was struck by the singularity of finding himself again on the same plank which he had trodden the evening when he heard for the first time the flattering whisper, soft as summer breezes:

"It is Monsieur Le Ministre!"

It was the same scenery, the same black figures moving over the same luminous boards. The same electric light glorified the scene of his defeat as for his triumph. Watchmen were walking up and down with a weary air. Several men watered the stage while others swept it up. And Sulpice watched the movements of these men as if deeply interested.

Suddenly Sulpice saw Granet, surrounded by an obsequious crowd, walk across the stage.

Molina was with the new Minister, and was laughing loudly, either at his own joke or some one's else.

And Vaudrey felt as if he had received a blow in the face.

He remembered how he had met Pichereau in almost that same spot, and hastily retreated behind a door in order not to be compelled to submit to the ironical hand-shake which Granet would, of course, bestow upon him, as he himself had done to Pichereau. In his haste to escape he received a muttered malediction from a little danseuse whose rose-colored shoe he had carelessly trodden upon, and heard a growl from a machinist who was pushing a fly.

He turned to the danseuse to apologize, and saw that this girl, whose blue eyes were so terrified when she discovered to whom she had thus spoken, was Marie Launay, whom he had seen in the *Foyer* the year previous, who had not "arrived" yet, while he had arrived and gone.

"I beg ten thousand pardons!" she said hastily, "I did not recognize you, Monsieur Le Ministre!"

He tried to reply, but this title with which, in her ignorance of political changes, this little girl had accosted him, gave him such exquisite pain that he hastily moved on.

He heard Lucien Granet's voice and saw that he was surrounded by a crowd, of whom Warcolier was one. The latter was talking very loudly, saying something which excited the uproarious laughter of Molina.

"Perhaps Madame Marsy asked some one to present this Granet to her," said Sulpice, with a weary smile, as he remembered how Guy de Lissac came in search of himself, to take him to the *loge* of the fashionable woman who was the caprice of the hour.

This was long ago! Sabine Marsy was dethroned and he himself!—

Some one touched him on the shoulder. He turned. It was Warcolier who had come up to speak to him, only that he might have the pleasure of patronizing the man who had been so long called Monsieur Le Ministre.

"Well, my dear Vaudrey, what is there new?" said Warcolier, smiling with that aggressive beatitude which is the specialty of contented simpletons.

"Nothing that I am aware of," answered Sulpice. "Verdi's music is superb, is it not?"

"A little too Wagnerian," said Warcolier, who repeated just what he had heard. "But I meant politics."

"Ah! politics are your affair now, not mine."

"Things are going very smoothly," Warcolier replied with delightful pomposity. "You see a Ministry was needed that was more — more —"

"Homogeneous, perhaps," said Vaudrey maliciously.

"Precisely. And after all, the duty of all good citizens is to defend the government under which we live."

This was too much for Vaudrey's gravity. He found his former secretary, now Granet's faithful tool, a little more than he could stand. He turned on his heel and left him.

Warcolier was not displeased. He was certain that he had offended the ex-Minister, and rejoiced in the conviction.

Vaudrey was about to return to his seat, angry with himself for having left it, and furious against this pretentious imbecile. When in the ante-room where Louis sat making a list of names, he stumbled against Lissac, who was just coming in.

Guy became very red on seeing him.

"It was necessary to come here to see you, it seems," said Sulpice. "Why have you never come to see me? Because I am no longer Minister?"

"That would have been a reason why I should have seen you oftener. No, it is not that. What do you wish me to say? You know my feelings. I do not intend to preach you a sermon, and yet I assure you I cannot be with you without saying things which would undoubtedly offend you. Therefore, I remained in my corner, and shall in future remain there more than ever. I am growing old, and I shall nurse my rheumatism."

In De Lissac's tone there was a tinge of melancholy.

"Then you will not come to see me?"

"To what end? Make your own reflections, my friend. You do not need me to watch over your careless feet. By the way, our fair friend is in the house."

"I have seen her," said Vaudrey with white lips.

"She is not yet a Duchess, but she will be in four days. If there was a rascal any where about now, how easily this wretch could be punished. Perhaps not, though, for this Rosas is so madly in love with her that he is quite capable of marrying her all the same."

"But," continued Lissac, all at once becoming serious, "have you read to-night's paper?"

"No, what is in it?"

They were near the open door of the house, they heard the orchestra. Guy took out "*Le Soir*" from his pocket and handed it to Vaudrey.

"Look at this. Poor Ramel! You were very fond of him."

"Ramel!"

Vaudrey did not need to read. He knew all as soon as Guy mentioned Ramel's name.

Dead! Yes, he died in his arm-chair near his window, as if he had merely fallen asleep.

"We announce," said the Editor, "the death of one of the elder journalists of the Parisian Press, Monsieur Denis Ramel, who was at one time widely known as the editor of an important but now defunct journal, the *Nation Française*."

This was all. No word of eulogy or regret, a mere statement of facts.

Vaudrey felt that this was very little for a man who had done so much.

"What do you think?" he said to Lissac, "are they not a little ungrateful?"

"What would you have?" answered Guy, with a shrug of the shoulders, "had he written opera bouffe, it would have been different."

They parted, after a lingering, regretful shake of the hand. Sulpice glanced once more at the *loge* where Marianne sat. She was now standing in the rear of

the box eating an ice. The attitude suddenly recalled the evening at Sabine Marsy's when she stood near the buffet, toying with her gilt spoon and a sherbet.

He closed his eyes, and rapidly descended the stairs. He fixed his thoughts on Ramel, that he might forget Marianne.

Denis had been ill for some time. He knew that his days were numbered, and the knowledge gave him pleasure. He wanted to disappear noiselessly, but politely, as he said, without attracting any attention—à l'Anglaise. Poor man! his wish had been granted.

Vaudrey threw himself into a carriage and drove to Batignolles, thinking as he went, of the sharp antithesis in Parisian life—the news of a friend's death heard at the Opera between the bars of a waltz—and he said to himself:

"*From Opera to Opera*, that would comprise the history of my Ministry."

The concierge in La Rue Boursault herself showed him up to Denis Ramel's apartment. The good old man lay on his bed. The awful majesty of death imparted a new character to that white face.

Denis Ramel had been Vaudrey's guide in his youth and his counsellor in later years. He remembered the first articles he had brought, on his arrival in Paris, to the editorial rooms of the *Nation Française*. If he had for a brief period since held the helm of the ship of State, it was to this man that he owed it.

He bent over the body and pressed on the brow the farewell kiss.

When he turned he saw a man whom he had not noticed, and who now came forward and saluted him in a timid way.

Vaudrey recognized in this pale man the Garnier, whom he had seen one day at Ramel's.

"It was kind of you to come," said this man. "He loved you so much."

"He died suddenly?"

"Yes, sir. He was reading a book—he still held it in his hand when he was found. They thought him asleep. Well! he has lived his life, and the grave will have him to-morrow. You will come to the funeral, Sir? And I would like to tell you that when I saw you here before, I had no idea who you were or I should not have said what I did. I beg your pardon. There will be a great crowd at the interment of Denis Ramel, if only a quarter come of those he has served."

Vaudrey was very sad the next day. Besides himself, Garnier, and one or two old women from the house where Ramel had died, who could only go a little way—as the Cemetery of *Saint Ouen* was too far off—there was literally no one. At the grave Vaudrey and the mechanic Garnier were alone, while Ramel was placed in a grave not far from the railroad.

For years, Ramel had been forgotten. He had allowed the ambitious to pass him, the ungrateful and the selfish to achieve their aims, and now these very ones who had called him "*dear master*," who had solicited and implored his aid had forgotten his very name!

To these persons he had died long since. If they thought of him at all, it was with a sneer, that he who had made and unmade Ministers and Governments, had achieved nothing for himself, but was still poor and obscure. At the news of his death, not one of those who owed everything to him—not one of those politicians now parading in the saddle, whose stirrups he had held to aid them to mount—not one of the actors in the Chamber of Deputies or at the Theatre, who had implored, entreated and flattered—not one of these came to pay the last tribute of respect.

This dismal solitude, this sharp wintry wind appeared as additional insults to Sulpice. Two men behind the bier of this man who had created them by dozens!

"An encouragement to Journalism, certainly!" said Vaudrey, bitterly.

A chill rain had begun to fall; railway trains were whistling past when this man, who had been Minister, left the cemetery accompanied by poor Garnier, who coughed feebly from behind the collar of his coat which he had turned up over his scarf.

Before the two men parted, Vaudrey somewhat timidly enquired if he had plenty of work.

"Thanks!" answered Garnier. "Yes, I have found a place and besides"—he nodded toward the black trees and the white tombstones, among which they had laid Ramel—"one always has a place at the last, and perhaps the best of all!"

He bowed, and Vaudrey turned away very much

depressed. It seemed to him that his life was ending, that he was leaving pieces of himself all along the road. The black drapery around Ramel's bier reminded him—and he smiled faintly at this new irony—of the upholsterer's bills he had yet to pay for the decorations the day of the fête, the last day of his power, and of his happiness.

The official provisions had not been enough. The Gobelin tapestry in the Administrative Mansion did not suffice, he wanted more modern decorations. He gave the coachman the address of the upholsterer—Boulevard des Capucines. He had hardly courage to enter and say, "I came to settle the bill of articles furnished at the Ministerial Residence."

It was, so to speak, another mortuary duty that he fulfilled. This bill paid for that intolerable evening seemed absolutely farcical, and he fancied that the upholsterer, as he took the money, with difficulty restrained a smile.

It was with a sensation of relief that he again found himself out of doors; he walked off quickly, hoping to warm the blood that seemed almost to have frozen in his veins.

His name spoken by some one behind him, caused him to turn. He saw before him Jéliotte, his old friend and companion from childhood. Jéliotte, who smilingly extended both hands.

"I told you you would always find me when I could not be suspected of interested motives. And now here I am. You will see me now as much as you choose!"

Jéliotte took Vaudrey's arm.

"You were going to the Chamber, were you?" he asked.

"Yes; that was precisely my intention."

"Then I will go with you. Now that you are no longer in power, there is some comfort in talking to you. I can say now just what I think. You have been guilty of many errors—you were too confiding and too modest—you were not determined enough by half. Of course you knew from the beginning that it was not going to last. Such things never do. Every one must have his turn, and, in fact, you are much happier to-day than when you were in power, if you would only think so."

Vaudrey was tempted to shake off this prosy simpleton who clung to his arm.

"Yes," resumed Jéliotte, "I like my friends much better when they are on the ground. I suppose that comes from the natural generosity of my disposition. You would have seen me sooner, though, had I not been away. I have just returned from Isère!"

"Ah!" said Vaudrey, thinking of Adrienne.

"And I have some very good news for you. If you are tired of politics you will have a good chance to rest at the approaching elections."

"How do you mean?" asked Sulpice.

"Yes—Thébaudier is electioneering at Grenoble. He has taken the town by storm. He is a model Mayor, and is down on you!"

"Down on me?"

"Yes. He is as firm as a rock, moreover. He thinks you were altogether too moderate, as do so many people."

"He? Why, he, under the Empire, was—"

"Precisely!" interrupted Jéliotte. "He is to-day as rabid a Republican as he was once a fierce Bonapartist. Oh! he is a great man, that Thébaudier. He will beat you. You see, in Isère they demand a more homogeneous representative!"

"Bless my soul!" said Vaudrey to himself, "am I to hear that word again?"

After all, what did all this talk about politics matter to him now that Ramel lay in his grave in the *Saint Ouen* Cemetery?

"By the way," said Jéliotte, abruptly, "I saw your wife at Grenoble!"

Vaudrey turned deadly pale.

"Ah!" was all he could say.

"She is terribly changed. She never leaves her uncle's house, and receives no one. She is ill, then?"

"Yes—a little."

"And you are separated?"

"No!"

Jéliotte laughed.

"Ah! I understand. Your wife was too exacting. What could you expect from her country breeding? But it will all come out right, and if it shouldn't where's the odds? You will be free. But of course if you are not interested in politics you will go to Grenoble to join her; your clients will all come to you.

As a lawyer you were highly considered; but as a Minister, I really must acknowledge that—"

"I shall be reëlected!" said Vaudrey, decidedly, hoping to cut short Jéliotte's long speech.

He was exasperated beyond words. This man's folly enraged him. It seemed to him that at every turn he encountered either positive sorrows or intense irritation. He wanted to quarrel with some one.

As he entered the ante-room of the Chamber of Deputies he came violently in contact with the portly person of a gentleman who did not bow to him, and yet whom he thought he knew.

He had not gone three steps, however, before he recalled the name of this person. It was the man, Monsieur Eugène, who had bowed so obsequiously before him for so many months, and who was as firmly attached to the ante-chamber as an oyster to its native rock.

This was too much, and the impoliteness of the fellow came at a most inopportune time.

Sulpice turned and went back to Monsieur Eugène.

"You were in the habit of saluting me courteously for some time, sir," he said coldly, "and I think I remember seeing you constantly in the ante-room of the Residence."

He expected a haughty reply from the man, and in that case Monsieur Eugène would have suffered for the sins of all the others that day.

To his amazement the man replied with a smile:

"I am always there, sir!"

Vaudrey looked at him quite stupefied, then with a vehemence really intended for all the fools and time-servers with whom he had been thrown, exclaimed:

"Then make up your mind to bow to me again, for I shall be there too!"

He turned on his heel and entered the Chamber. He heard wild shouts of applause, and bit his lips.

Lucien Granet was in the Tribune, and the majority were hailing him with acclamations.

CHAPTER XVII.

RETRIBUTION.

MARIANNE KAYSER had the good taste, or, perhaps, the common sense, not to desire a solemn, stately marriage. Little did it matter to her how furtively she entered into her Duchy, provided she was Sovereign. She would have ample time later to hold her head high under her Ducal crown; in the meantime she meekly contented herself with her wreath of orange blossoms. She had dismissed Jean and Justine, each with a generous present, thinking it unwise to keep near her, people who knew Vaudrey.

She advised Justine to marry—to marry Jean.

"Marriage is very amusing," she said.

"Madame is very good," answered Justine. "But Madame must see for herself that sometimes it is best to wait. There is no hurry, and no one can tell what will happen."

The future Duchess was not altogether flattered by the astute reflections of this girl. In future, she said to herself, she would keep her people at a distance. She was delighted when at last she found herself alone in her house. She could now tell as many falsehoods as she pleased to Rosas. The Duc, who was madly in love, was, as Lissac said, quite capable of accepting

all if he could only have this woman for his wife. He was her slave. She kept him such by her passionate tenderness, which, however, only allowed him to go certain lengths. At the same time she placed herself under strong restraint, as Rosas had awakened a very real and positive feeling in her own heart.

He was different from any man she had ever met. His pallor, his thoughtful, earnest eyes, interested and excited her.

She said to him sometimes that, in spite of his gentle ways, he reminded her of a tiger, "or of a cat, for I am more or less of a cat, myself." Much as she loved him she was conscious that there were depths in his nature yet unsounded.

She was in haste to have the marriage over, furtively if need be, but completely and legally. She feared lest some sudden revelation should be made to José—she did not know what nor how—an anonymous letter, a chance meeting with Guy, an explanation of some kind.

"But I am foolish to trouble myself about Guy," she thought. "His threats are only words!"

The Duc treated her as if she were a simple, innocent young girl, making her swear to him that she had never loved any one but himself. She swore to anything he asked, saying to Uncle Kayser:

"Oaths like that are as political oaths—they bind one to nothing."

The uncle began to have for his "little Marianne" a feeling of the most intense admiration. She was,

indeed, a most wonderful woman. She had promised to build him an atélier where he could not only paint at his ease, but lie on a sofa and smoke while enunciating his theories of Art, and Morality in Art.

He, too, advised that the marriage should be concluded with all speed, and without much noise. He said to his niece:

"Let me tell you, my dear, that you ought to go to the Mairée as softly as if you were treading on eggs!"

"Don't be troubled," answered Marianne, laughing; "there will be nothing broken!"

The marriage was celebrated. "At last!" said Kayser. It was a formality rather than a ceremony. Marianne looked very beautiful, and was in exultant spirits. Her pale skin was tinged with a soft, rosy flush, like an azalea touched by the sun. Never had Rosas thought her so lovely. How foolish he had been, he said to himself, to attach so much weight to appearances and go away from her. He had thus lost years of love which he could never find again. The loss of all this time was irreparable.

Ah! how he would love her now! They would travel. In three days they were to start for Italy, trunks encumbered the halls of the Hôtel in the Avenue Montaigne, their nuptial home. Marianne would take away with her all the treasures kept by her in that little room in Rue Cuvier, where Rosas had so often said to her: "I love you!"

"People take with them their Penates," she said, "and I carry with me, my fetiches."

Rosas was drunk with joy. His wildest dreams of happiness were fulfilled. This woman, with her kisses and her tears, made him nearly delirious. He felt as if he were twenty again, and was eager to be far away from the mud and fog of Paris.

"These rainy pavements shining in the gaslight," he said to her, "are very dismal. Let us seek a bluer sky, Marianne—the orange trees at Nice and the stars at Naples."

She smiled.

"How persistently these men all talk about blue!" she said to herself.

She would have liked to remain yet a few days longer in Paris, and to have exhibited herself under her new name at the Bois, and at the theatres where she had spent so many sad and lonely hours. It seemed to her that her triumph crushed men and things. What did she care for Naples? She had never dragged her sick and disappointed heart along the Chiajá. In Florence she would be as good—no more and no less—than any other Duchess. But here in Paris, where each familiar corner recalled disappointments and deceptions, which had made of her what she was—these Boulevards, the Lake and the theatres should all witness her triumph as they had her despair.

"Just two days more? One day, then!" she cried. "After the opening night of the *Variétés*, we will go."

"Ah! what a thorough Parisian you are!" answered José.

She looked at him with a radiant smile.

"You must go to the *Variétés*. You remember that music you sang when you were ill? I can hear it now, and we shall hear it again there."

Uncle Kayser, who was very cautious, counselled an immediate departure. He dreaded, he scarce knew what. He feared everything, and each morning when he opened the papers, it was with the expectation of seeing some indiscreet articles on the Duc and Duchesse de Rosas.

"These journalists care nothing for the sanctity of private life," he muttered. "They should be taught to consider moral as well as tangible walls."

At last it was settled that they were to go in two days. Rosas wanted to see Guy once more. On calling in the Rue d'Aumale he was told that Monsieur de Lissac was out of town. The blinds of the apartment were not closed, and for a moment the Duc was tempted to insist, but he thought better of it and went away somewhat annoyed. The day was pleasant and he walked back to the Avenue Montaigne, where Marianne was superintending her packing.

On entering the Hôtel, where the doors of all the rooms stood wide open, as is generally the case when packing and moving is going on, and which almost always imparts an air of inexpressible dreariness to a place, he was astonished to hear a man's voice, neither that of a servant nor of Uncle Kayser—answering violent reproaches addressed by Marianne.

He did not know this voice, and the sound of a

bell, suddenly and violently rung, caused him to hasten his steps, as if thus warned of some danger threatening the Duchesse.

The Hôtel, in a state of disorder which suggested pillage, and at this hour of a December afternoon, looked inexpressibly dreary. José's heart contracted with a premonition of evil.

He hastened to the salon where Marianne, wrapped in a black satin dressing-gown, stood near the chimney, her white fingers clutching the bell-rope, which she still continued to pull.

Before her was a young man whom Monsieur de Rosas did not know. This man had his hat on his head, and his hands in the pockets of his overcoat. His whole bearing was intensely insolent.

Marianne had rung for a servant. She was flushed with rage, but when she saw the Duc she turned deadly pale.

"What is all this?" asked de Rosas, coldly, as he advanced and took his position between the Duchess and this man.

The man turned hastily, took off his hat and said:

"The Duc de Rosas, I suppose?"

"Yes," answered José, "and may I inquire?—"

"It is nothing!" cried Marianne, running to her husband, and taking his hands as if to drag him away.

"Nothing, indeed!" said the man, shifting his attitude a little, placing the hand which held the hat, on his left arm, in the attitude of a fencing master, who wishes to be especially elegant. "Do you call it nothing to treat a gentleman as you have treated me?"

Then addressing the Duc, he said, with a knowing air, "I am Adolphe Gochard—have you ever heard the name, sir?"

"No;" answered José.

"I should think not—"

"Ah! excuse me," said Gochard, interrupting Marianne. "You rang the bell—you wanted your people; here they are. You threatened to have me thrown out neck and heels. You summoned your lacqueys, they therefore can hear all I have to say."

There was a crowd of servants now about the door, indistinctly seen in the gathering shadows of approaching night.

"Go away!" cried Marianne.

"And why?" asked the Duc coldly, very much astonished at this order.

"Because Madame naturally prefers that I should tell you alone that which I have to say," Gochard hastily remarked. "She accused me—yes me, sir—of black-mailing."

The Duc's lips were very white, and his teeth glittered as he said with great determination:

"I do not know what the Duchesse de Rosas has said to you, nor what you have had the audacity to say to her, but you will leave this room instantly."

"You think so!" said the man, moving his shoulders with the air of an athlête.

"I think so."

"You astonish me," sneered Gochard. "But really, you people in fashionable circles have not much

to boast of in the way of manners. You are very impolite."

"We do not pride ourselves on our politeness to scoundrels. You are an intruder in my house."

"Oh! I know very well that this is your house," said the man with a wink. "But Madame lived a long time at my expense in la Rue Prony, and it was from me that she got the money to hire the Hôtel Vanda."

"Your expense? The Hôtel Vanda?"

The Duc looked at Marianne, who, white as death, instead of showing the smallest indignation at this charge, continued to drag her husband away as if from some overwhelming danger.

"Ah!" said José quietly. "Have the goodness to explain."

"It is a very simple matter. I need money. La Dujarrier did not give me enough to carry over this matter—she is too close, you understand—and I was obliged to draw from my own resources, and now I want my funds again. I came to Madame and asked her for it. She got very angry, and instead of understanding that I came as a friend, she said she would have me turned out of doors, and called me to my face a black mailer!"

As a friend! This man dared to say before her, who bore the name of the Duchesse de Rosas that he was a friend of hers. This alcoholic wretch had aided Marianne to underlet the hôtel of some *fille*. Rue Prony! Vanda! What could such names have in common with that of the Duchesse? And La Dujarrier, with whose

whole history this haughty Castilian was familiar, what had she to do with Marianne?

It was plain that Gochard meant to tell all. He had kept silent up to this time, he said, but he had been insulted, and now he should speak.

Rosas realized this with a terrified sinking of the heart and with Marianne's hands clinging to his arm, but after a while he became aware, as Gochard continued, that it was Marianne who now wished to go, and that it was he who held her with a firm grasp on her wrist, forcing her to hear every word.

"Ah! you thought I was afraid to speak!" said Gochard, "did you? Well! you will find out that I am not!"

And then, with the easy, insolent air of a clown at a circus who wishes to be funny, and with the firm determination of revenging himself on this woman who had talked of black mail and of the police, he related all he knew. He gave every shameful detail of Marianne's early history; he told of her poverty and her impatience under it, of the combination between Mademoiselle Kayser and Dujarrier, the hiring of the Hôtel Vanda, Vaudrey's note and its renewals. Gochard then explained that Dujarrier had not paid him a high enough commission on this affair, and said women were always close.

Rosas listened with beating temples. There was a strange whirring sound in his ears. His grasp on Marianne's arm became firmer and fiercer, his fingers were buried in her tender flesh, while she, unconscious, glared furiously at Gochard.

When he had finished, she tore herself from Rosas with a tremendous effort, and running up to Gochard, spat in his face.

He lifted his fist.

"Off with you!" cried the Duc, "you shall be paid."

"Money is not everything. I wish also to be treated with respect," muttered Gochard, as he wiped his cheek.

He laid his card on the table.

"Adolphe Gochard, my address is there, too, but Madame knows it. I am afraid of nobody."

"You shall be paid!" shrieked Marianne, "but go now, robber that you are—go!"

"Nonsense!" said Adolphe, placing his hat on one side of his head, "words never hurt anybody yet! I have said all I meant to say, all I want to say, and have not the slightest wish to stay here any longer."

He disappeared, shuffling out of the room like a mountebank who does not quite know how to get off the stage.

Rosas did not even see him go.

He had taken Marianne's two hands and dragged her to the window, where there was still a little daylight coming in, and then, with his pale face twitching convulsively, he looked her full in the eyes.

She was horribly frightened. She believed that he was going to kill her.

She dropped on her knees.

He still held her hands, and did not take his eyes from her.

"Vaudrey was the man I saw with you at your uncle's? He was your lover then?"

She did not reply.

"You lied to me! Answer me, miserable wretch! You lied to me!"

"I loved you!" said Marianne.

"Loved me!" answered Rosas, in a hoarse voice. "You wanted precisely what that scoundrel wanted—money! Why did you not tell me so? Why did you not ask for money? I could have given you all I had, my entire fortune! But not my name! not my name!"

He flung her from him.

She was still kneeling, or rather crouching, at his feet. She looked down on the carpet, and was even conscious of its pattern.

She was certain that she was to die. José, in his anger, reminded her of a wild beast. His eyes were fixed on her, bloodshot and strange.

Then he began to laugh like an hysterical girl.

"Fool! Fool! Fool! To take the Duchess de Rosas from Vanda's Hôtel! Fool that I am!"

Marianne wanted to speak, but she was chilled with horror. Her tongue was stiff and as if paralyzed, her throat seemed to contract. She felt that she had found her master.

"José!" she whispered at last, and then again, in a lower voice, "José!"

He started, as if this name from her lips were an insult.

"What is done is done!" he said coldly. "So much the worse for fools! And now, listen to me!"

His slender hands, with their grip of steel, again crushed Marianne's wrist.

"You wished to be called the Duchesse de Rosas! You worked for this title, lied for it. But I do not choose that you should besmirch it by dragging it through the salons of Paris under the laughing, contemptuous gaze of people who have known you. You were unwilling to leave Paris; it was some lover who detained you—it was Vaudrey, or Lissac, or one of a half dozen others!"

"I swear to you—"

"Ah! you have sworn too much already! Your falsehoods cannot be counted. We will start, as we intended, but not for Italy! Italy is good only for those who love each other. You do not know Fuentecarral? You will know it; it is now your castle. Yours—because you are a Rosas!"

He laughed coldly, and then like a judge sentencing a criminal, he continued, solemnly:

"We shall go to Toledo. You asked me one day if that was the château where I was born; yes, and it will make an excellent prison. But when one enters there one never leaves it again. The device you bear is not gay, it is eloquent. We shall be at Toledo in three days. There are long lines of portraits of Duchesses de Rosas, who will look down on you from the lofty walls, and as they have never seen courtesans among them, they will wonder why you have come. I shall tell them that I have brought you there to live out your days alone with me, because I did not choose that any

one should sneer at the Duc de Rosas for marrying a woman like yourself. Yes, I am romantic; I know it, and belong to a past age. You have aroused the half Arab beneath the Castilian surface. So much the worse for you, that you have made me remember that I am a Rosas!"

Marianne still crouched on the floor, listened to the Duc's footsteps as he paced the room, which in spite of the thickness of the carpets, sounded as if his heels were of iron.

Sometimes, when he came very near, his shadow spread over her, and she gasped with fear. She felt as if a tomb yawned before her, as if a blast of cold air struck her in the face.

She shivered and moaned:

"Pity! Pardon!"

"Madame la Duchesse," said Rosas, coldly, "I am one of those men who can very easily be deceived, but I am not one of those who forgive as readily. I have been incredibly foolish. So much the worse for me! So much the worse for you! Rosas you are, Rosas you will remain. I have been your victim? Granted; but now the tables are turned, you will be mine. Nothing, it seems to me, could be more just. I desire neither the scandal of a law suit nor that of two or three duels. I shall be ridiculous in the eyes of all who know me, but in yours and mine, I am not ridiculous. I did not choose to be your lover, and I have only just become your husband. *Hasta la muerte*! I do not fear the chill or the walls

of the Escurial, I am accustomed to it. If you should shiver under it, whose is the fault? We go to-night. To-night!" repeated Rosas, while Marianne sank fainting under the heavy burthen of her title, the *Duchesse de Rosas!*

Simon Kayser came to dinner and learned, to use his own expression, "that the pot had boiled over. How had this accursed Duc learned it all?"

And he took the affair much to heart.

"It is a great pity," he said to himself, after wondering a little where he was to get his dinner, "and I see just what he will do. He will let her mope to death within those four walls. It was hardly worth while to manage everything so successfully for a Goohard to come and spoil it all. I pity poor little Marianne! It was beautifully planned, beautifully carried out, this campaign of hers—and there it goes! Ends in smoke! It is never worth while to do things artistically, unless it is to play the part of a dupe. We should have been happier to-day, this girl and I, if she had been a *cocotte* and I a photographer."

THE END.

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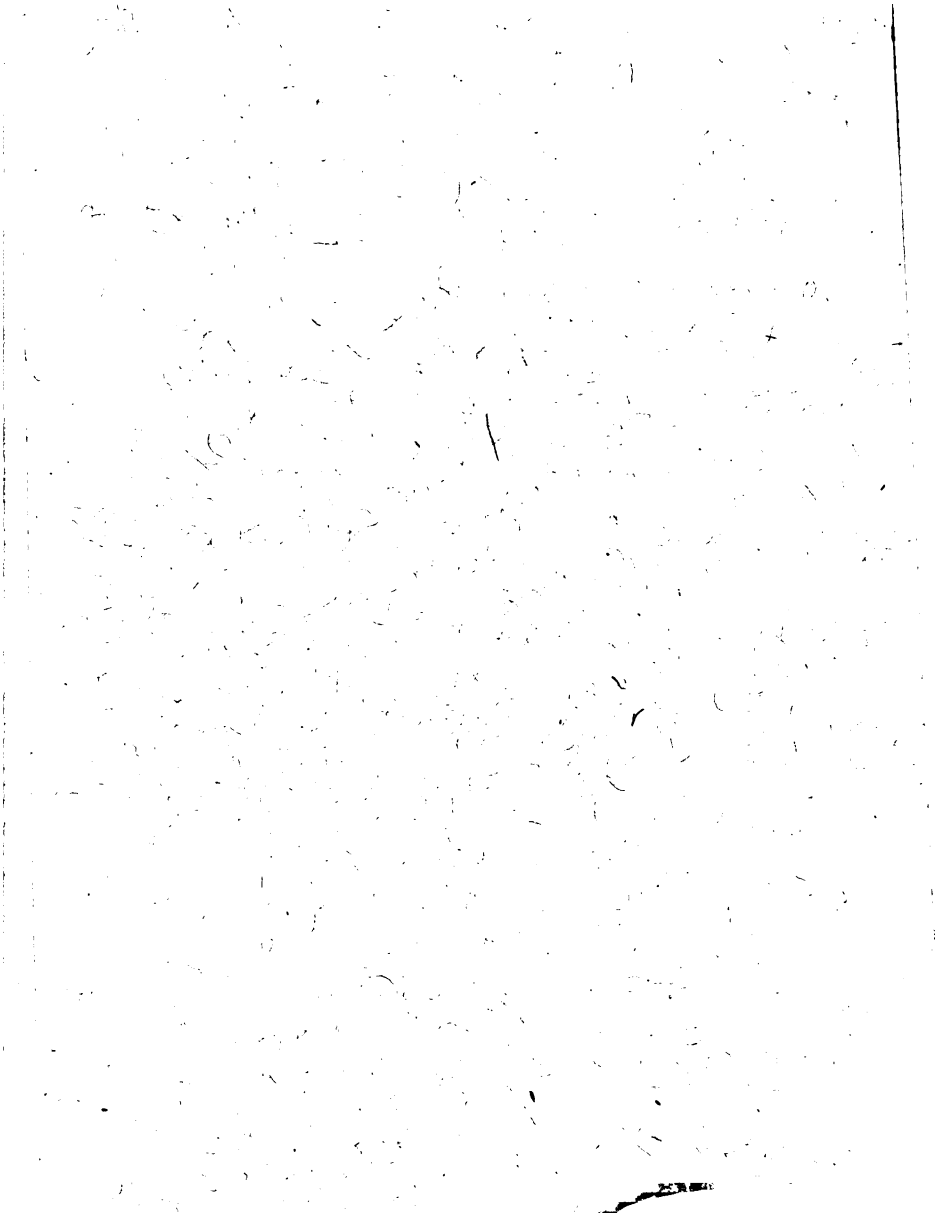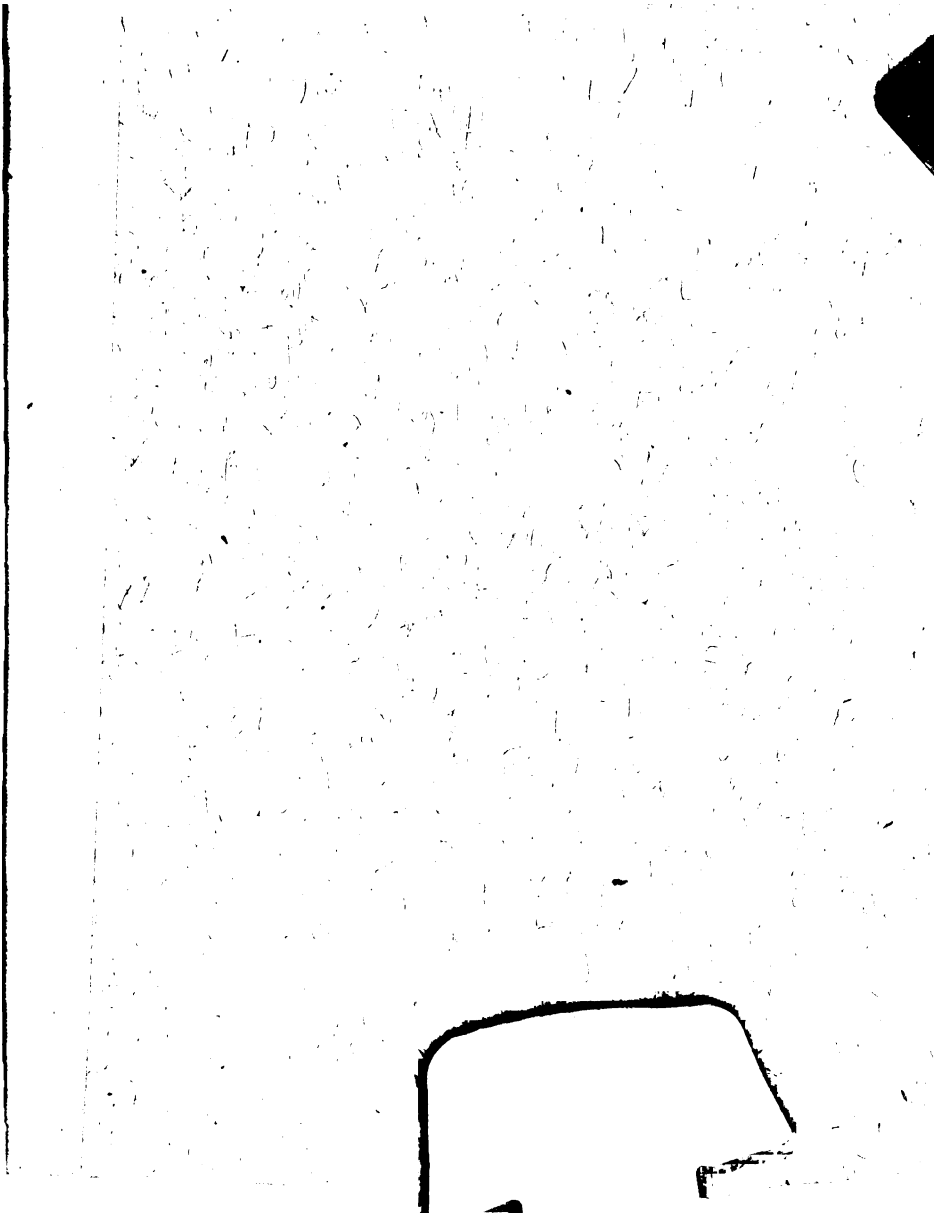
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